

ISSUE #20:
30 YEARS OF
THE LEGEND
OF ZELDA

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
TWILIGHT PRINCESS HD

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
FOR Wii U

UNDERTALE

POKKÉN
TOURNAMENT

FIRE EMBLEM FATES:
BIRTHRIGHT &
CONQUEST

INTERVIEW:
CLYDE "TOMATO"
MANDELIN

THE UNLOCALIZED
BS ZELDAS

FINAL FANTASY
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RETURN TO
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A STORY OF SEASONS
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LEGO
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LEGO STAR WARS:
THE FORCE AWAKENS

PROJECT X ZONE 2

MEGA MAN
LEGACY COLLECTION

ZERO TIME DILEMMA

FREEDOM PLANET 2

MiitOMO

POKÉMON
RED, BLUE & YELLOW:
20TH ANNIVERSARY

**MARCH/
APRIL 2016**

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HYRULE
WARRIORS
LEGENDS

POWER TO THE PATRONS!

Nintendo Force fans, you continue to amaze! Since we all started on this journey of preserving Nintendo Power's legacy over three years ago, you've followed and supported us every step of the way – from that very first, overly expensive Issue #1 on MagCloud, through our two different campaigns on Kickstarter and now at our new base of operations for subscriptions on Patreon. Thank you all for being customers, then backers and now patrons, taking on whatever new role necessary to continue to be NF subscribers!

And you can be reassured that we're not planning on asking you to jump through any more hoops – Patreon will serve as our long-term hub for gathering together all of our subscribers in one place and keeping everything organized. The outpouring of support there has been incredible so far! The employees of Patreon itself have been taken aback, as the Force of Nintendo fans descended upon the site and blasted through the all-time support rankings in just a few weeks' time. As of this writing, over 2,000 patrons have signed up, and we've climbed all the way up into the Top 30 of all-time most supported Patreon pages. Yowza!

If you're signed up as a patron, you can now kick back and just let the magazines keep coming to your inbox and/or mailbox – just make sure you log in to Patreon and update your mailing address through "Edit Pledge" if you happen to move to a new place! You might also want to log in there just to check in and see what's new from time to time too, as we'll be posting regular updates about each new upcoming issue, holding new giveaways and seeking your feedback as well!

NF Magazine couldn't exist without all of you. Thanks for being spectacular fans!

Patreon.com/NintendoForce



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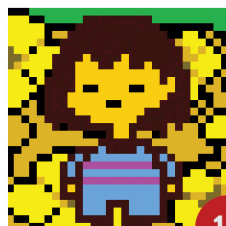
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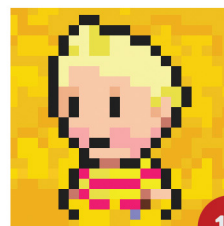
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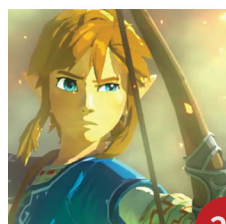
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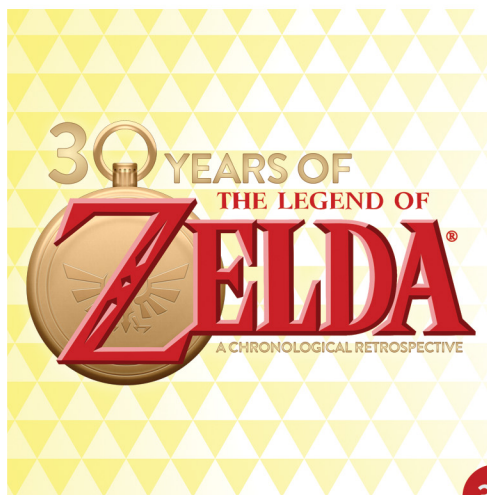
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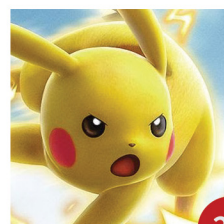
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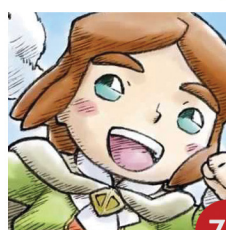
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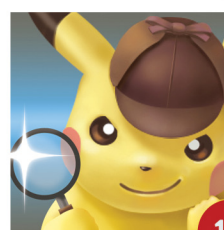
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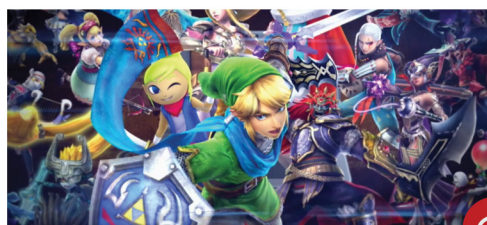
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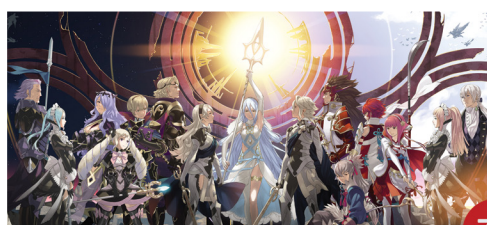
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ON THE COVER

With two different Legend of Zelda releases happening in the month of March, we had to choose between Twilight Princess HD or Hyrule Warriors Legends to claim our coveted cover spot. In the end, we decided on the latter – because with its crossover of characters from the past 30 years of Zelda sequels, it seems appropriate to represent the series' 30th anniversary! (Also, there's a nice bit of symmetry with our own history, as the Wii U Hyrule Warriors was our cover game for Issue #10, 10 issues ago.)



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INBOX

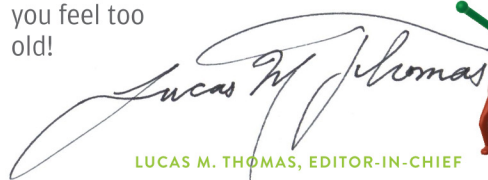
LINK HITS THE BIG 3-0

Another major milestone moment has arrived, and you know what that means – tons of aging Nintendo fans saying, "Man! I'm getting old!" It's a line we've heard again and again, so much so that it's getting old to hear people say that they're getting old. But it is true. And it becomes even more true every time it's said!

There's no denying the weight of a full 30 years of existence for anything, be it a person or a thing, but it's particularly interesting to see video game brands hitting lofty anniversaries like this, because the medium of video games itself hasn't been around much longer than that – and especially not in our living rooms at home. And technology has advanced so far, so fast over that same span of years that it's almost wild to look back and see how drastically things have changed just since the '80s – going from simple, blocky graphics on tube TVs to the newest high-definition, fully 3D immersive adventures. It's been quite a journey, and especially so for those of us who are "getting old" and have been around to witness the evolution of games with our own aging eyes.

To celebrate The Legend of Zelda turning 30 years old, we wanted to find a way to convey the weight of that full three decades of time – so in this issue you'll find our biggest single feature in NF history to date, chronicling how the series developed in each individual year along the way! Then the Hyrulian goodness spreads out across the other areas of this issue as well, from our reviews of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess HD and our cover game Hyrule Warriors Legends to our wishlist of features we'd like to see in The Legend of Zelda for Wii U, and even to a look back at a couple of Zelda adventures that American fans never got to play in this edition's Retro section!

I hope you enjoy everything we've prepared for you this time – and that it doesn't make you feel too old!


LUCAS M. THOMAS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



ISSUE #19:
JANUARY/
FEBRUARY 2016

LETTERS

You know we all want a Tingle amiibo. I think it could be used in a Zelda game to open up an instant item shop – that would be a helpful feature. Tingle's always been a merchant selling maps or whatever in different Zelda games, and it would be a perfect fit. – **KYLE ROCKOFF**

If more Zelda series amiibo are imminent, then Linkle needs to be atop that list! The in-game functionality of her amiibo could be completely replacing Link in the upcoming Legend of Zelda game for Wii U (with dialogue, equipment and cinema scenes all altered to cater to Linkle). Another possibility would be a Linkle character swap to Link in Super Smash Bros., similar to the male & female versions of Villager, Wii Fit Trainer, Robin and Corrin. – **SIDNEY ENG**

Wind Waker HD is without a doubt my favorite Zelda. It was the first Zelda I enjoyed, but not the first I played (sorry Ocarina of Time 3D and Link's Awakening DX). The art style combined with the refined and perfected combat mechanics and controls, and the light-hearted nature of the story and characters made it a fantastic adventure I'll never forget! – **MICHAEL BEN**

My favorite Zelda game has always been Link's Awakening on GBC. The first Zelda I played was A Link to the Past, but I didn't play all the way through it as a child – Link's Awakening was the first Zelda game I completed. I love the story and characters! It has such a special

Our first new issue of 2016 was focused on the topic of game delays, and its cover game has proven to be even more appropriate in hindsight – but more on that in the News section. Here in the Inbox, it's time to focus on your responses to our Zelda-related questions from the last Player's Poll! We asked you all if the next Zelda game should stay on Wii U or move to NX (or appear on both). We asked which Zelda characters should get amiibo figures. And we asked which Zelda sequel is your all-time favorite, and why! Here's what you all had to say:

place in my heart. I remember trying to get all the photos and using my Game Boy Printer to print them out. I loved Marin following you around and how crazy she was. "Great! Dig it! Dig it! Dig to the center of the earth!!" And I loved sprinkling Magic Powder on Buzz Blobs and them saying, "Hey Mon!" Such great memories! – **CARRIE HERMANN**

For my favorite, it's a tie: Zelda II and Twilight Princess.

I borrowed Zelda II from a friend for so long that his Mom demanded that I have my Dad return it before I left their house one day. Once I obtained my own copy I spent a long snow day completing it, and I clear it annually to this day.

Twilight Princess was the first Zelda game I shared with my wife and one we both love spending time in. The dungeons and bosses are fun, the overworld is vibrant with life and I love taking Epona everywhere, even just across a path. I've spent hours enjoying a nice horse ride in that world and gazing up at the stars. The good news is that the HD version is releasing on our anniversary! – **ROBERT P. MALAS**
Happy anniversary to Mr. and Mrs. Malas! The Legend of Zelda, ladies and gentlemen – the key to a long-lasting, successful marriage.

For my favorite, it's between Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask and Wind Waker. I like all of these for very different reasons, but I think the one I'd be able to go back and play for the rest of my life would be Ocarina of Time. MM and WW both improved upon it in a ton of



A LINK TO THE WOODS

Just in time to make the cut for our issue celebrating The Legend of Zelda's 30th anniversary, a reader named Alice reached out to us with some examples of her stunning Nintendo fan photography! You can see much more on her Instagram account, @happy_mask_salesman8. And if you've ever got any fan art you'd like to share, send it to us at Inbox@NFMagazine.com!



ways, but for me the perfect Zelda formula was established and perfected with Ocarina of Time – not too much fluff, not too little content, and at no point do I feel like anything is dragging on. It's paced perfectly, which is something that many modern games have a lot of trouble getting down.
– **ZACHARY DIGIULIO**

I feel The Legend of Zelda for Wii U should be on both platforms, Wii U and NX, since it's coming so close to the latter console's release date. It's a lot like what happened with Twilight Princess on the GameCube and Wii – though if they do go that route, I hope it's handled better than the Wii version of Twilight Princess. The mirroring was very disorienting.
– **MANWITH NONAME**

I think that the new Zelda game should only come out on Wii U. The Wii U doesn't have very many big-name blockbuster games, and it could use an exclusive Zelda title.
– **ROMANIAN PRINCE**

I want to be able to replace the guide character in the upcoming Zelda sequel with amiibo characters who would help in slightly different ways. Either with Tingle all the powerful to get dat mad dosh, yo; or you could simply *LET LOOSE THE GROOSE!*
– **ZACHARY CZARNECKI**
Customizing the inevitable Navi/Fi/Midna helper character, huh? That's an idea that we could run with – it'd be like changing your car's GPS system to have the voice of Morgan Freeman.

The two Zelda amiibo we can definitely expect are a Linkle amiibo and an amiibo for the new Link in Zelda Wii U. The Linkle amiibo would earn the player in Hyrule Warriors Legends new weapons, and the Link amiibo in Zelda Wii U could serve any purpose – but I don't think Nintendo will make fans buy separate merchandise to complete a Zelda adventure. The amiibo will probably do something like

refill Link's health and items or allow the player to play an exclusive minigame.
– **TYLER LANDMAN**

It would be amazing if we could get all the sages from Ocarina of Time as amiibo, but seeing as how that game has been remade a few times, it's more of a dream. I would be fine, though, with getting amiibo of the different races from the Zelda series, particularly a Goron and a Zora as they seem to make the most consistent appearances. Just like a few of Link's items from A Link to the Past, the amiibo could unlock a mini dungeon that would contain an item that isn't necessary to complete the game, but can make the quest easier and is fun to use. Think Magic Cape or Bombos Medallion.
– **BEN LOPEZ**

Well, now you've got me thinking about the Magic Cape and the Bombos Medallion – and you're totally right! Newer Zelda games have gotten away from those just-for-fun items. It would be a blast to be able to make Link turn invisible again for no practical reason!

The Legend of Zelda for Wii U should be on the Wii U because, I mean, it's in the title. But it should end with a plot twist, where Zelda has a boulder falling over her, and right when it's about to hit her, it fades to black and says,

"To find out what happens, buy the NX sequel.
– Love, Nintendo" – **CONNOR**

I would like to see ??? (first seen in Majora's Mask), and the ??? amiibo would take all of the paper items you're carrying in exchange for hearts.
– **JUSTIN KEYS**
Just don't hand him this magazine!



DON'T ANGER THE OX



HD that, 3D this . . . that's great and all, but on this, the 30th anniversary of The Legend of Zelda, I have to ask: Where are the remakes and remasters for the games that *really* need it? You know the ones I'm talking about – the originals! The Legend of Zelda and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link for the Nintendo Entertainment System! Sure, we have their Virtual Console releases, and those are great at preserving the original games, but Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask got VC encores, too, and those didn't stop anyone from updating them!

Ever since Super Mario All-Stars, I've wanted to see the original Zelda games get the same kind of treatment – and we sort of almost did! Or at least a peek at what an All-Stars-ified The Legend of Zelda would look like in the Japan-exclusive Satellaview release (see Page 55 for more details). The first three and a half (looking at you, Lost Levels) Super Mario Bros. games got the 16-bit treatment, Metroid got a Game Boy Advance remake, Kid Icarus got a 3D Classics update and Kirby's Adventure got both a GBA remake and a 3D Classics update! So why is Zelda being left out of the mix?

Much as I love them, even I'll admit these two literal legends of gaming could use a bit of fine-tuning that usually comes par for the course with such updates. But really, this is seriously long overdue, and it's time Nintendo finally did something about it!

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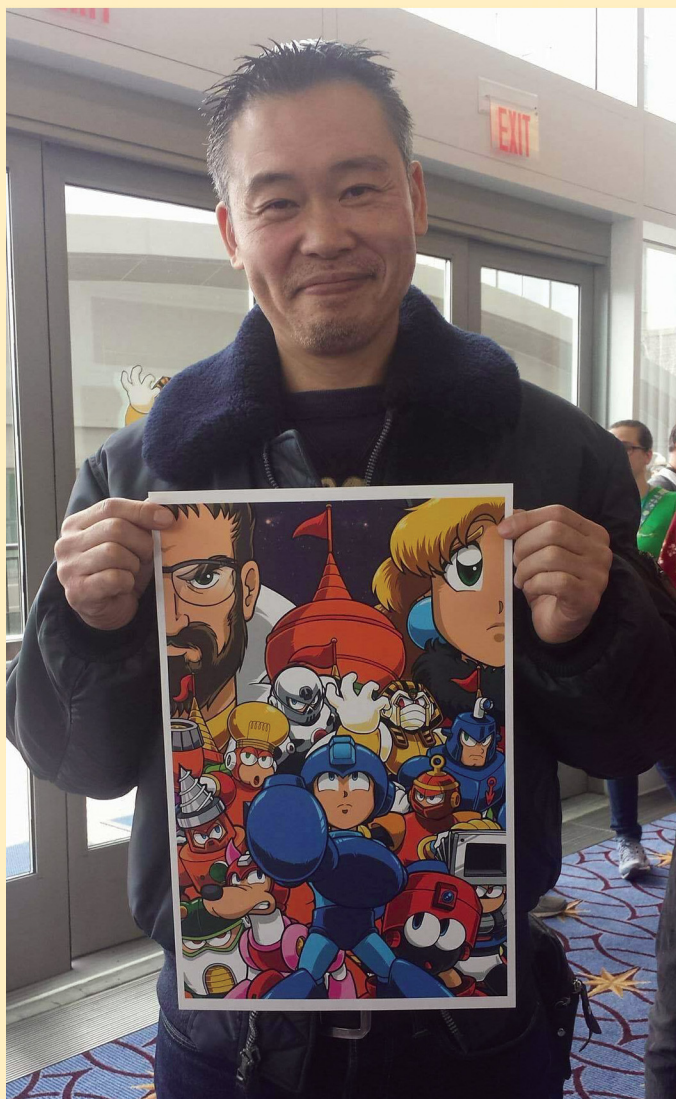
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A MEGA
MOMENT
FOR THOR!

Senpai noticed him! If you've been reading NF for a while, you're already familiar with the great artwork that Thor Thorvaldson provides for our pages in each new issue – he's even illustrated three of our posters! Our magazine isn't the only place where Thor shows off his skills, though, and recently he provided the promotional art used at the Mega Man-athon 4 charity gaming event that took place during MAGFest 2016 in Maryland. Guess who just so happened to be in attendance? Yep, none other than the god-father of Mega Man himself, Keiji Inafune, who even took the time to smile and strike a pose holding up Thor's newest poster. Congrats, Thor! Now everyone look over at the very next page for Thor's latest!

THE PLAYER'S POLL

Congratulations to **Romanian Prince**, our winner of last issue's Player's Poll! Your new chance to win is below, and this time around we're interested to know your thoughts on games that have never made it out of Japan. Answer all three!

QUESTION #1

Mother 3 may finally be released in English, and soon! Are you already familiar with it, or would it be totally new to you?

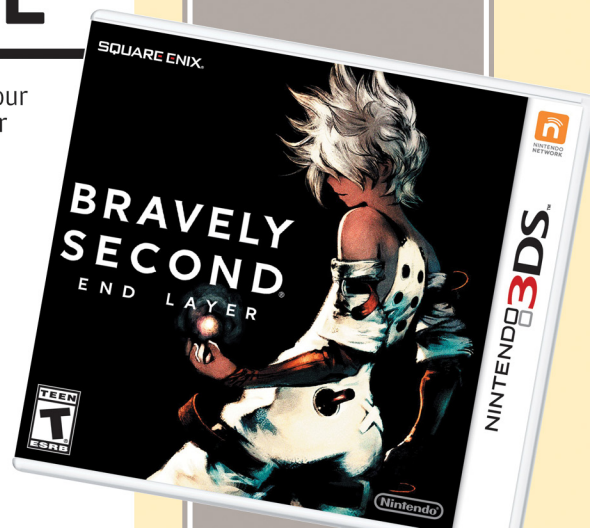
QUESTION #2

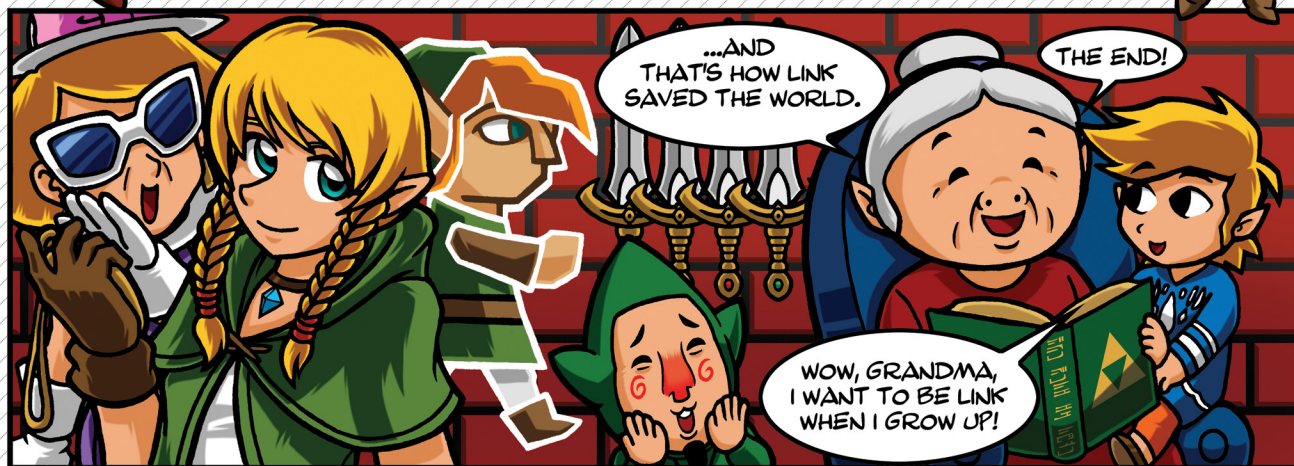
If you could pick one, which untranslated game that never left Japan would you immediately make Nintendo localize?

QUESTION #3

Have you ever played any fan translations of games that never got an official localized release? Which ones, and how were they?

Send your responses to PlayersPoll@NFMagazine.com with the subject line "Player's Poll for Issue #20" – this time, one reader whose answers are picked for print will win a copy of the brand-new *Bravely Second: End Layer*!







NEWS



ONE GRAND RE-OPENING

The Nintendo World Store is reborn as Nintendo NY.

THERE'S A NEW destination for American fans wanting to make a pilgrimage in honor of their love for Nintendo . . . well, kind of. The destination's actually at the same address where the Nintendo World Store has been found for the past decade, but when you roll into that corner of Rockefeller Center from now on, you'll instead be greeted by the all-new "Nintendo NY." The World Store was closed down for a month-long renovation and rebranding beginning on January 19, and on February 19, the doors were re-opened.

Nintendo NY (which is written as "NY" in text like this, but said as "New York" when you speak it out loud) is serving the same purpose it has since 2005 – a grand, central celebration of all things Nintendo located in the heart of one of America's biggest cities. Its transition from being the World Store was not as extreme this time as when the same location previously became the World Store, as before that it was The Pokémon Center – totally focused on Pikachu's series. (For the record, that era lasted from November 2001 until May 2005.)

Inside the "new" store you'll still find a huge selection of Pokémon merchandise, but also a grand array of items inspired by nearly every other series under Nintendo's umbrella. The limited, always-sold-out items like the Mega Yarn Yoshi amiibo? They've got 'em in stock. And you can enjoy the newest upcoming games on several preview stations, including one that's equipped with a massive 15-foot TV!

If you're anywhere within a reasonable traveling distance of New York City, you owe it to yourself to plan a trip to the new Nintendo NY!



I can't believe I've still never been there in person! That's it – I'm planning a road trip. Neal? Kevin? You guys live nearby, right? You got a couch I could crash on for the night? I'll pay you back with a snazzy Nintendo NY T-shirt!
– LUCAS





GENERATION VII APPROACHES

Pokémon Sun & Moon will arrive for Holiday 2016.

AT THE STROKE of midnight, Japan Standard Time, on February 27, 2016 – 20 years to the day Pocket Monsters Red and Green were first released in Japan – TPC president Tsunekazu Ishihara officially announced that two new Pokémon titles will be appearing on the Nintendo 3DS for the 2016 holiday season: Pokémon Sun and Pokémon Moon. While many (including me in our last issue) had speculated that Ishihara would be announcing "Pokémon Z" as the follow-up to 2013's Pokémon X and Y, the new titles and logos had been leaked about a day before, when they were found on a European trademark registry database, so they were no surprise.

Ishihara's Pokémon Direct presentation (which featured him doing the late Satoru Iwata's "Directly to you!" gesture) started with a brief retrospective of the Pokémon franchise over the last 20 years, showcasing fans trading, battling and catching 'em all before officially revealing the new titles to the world. Aside from showing the staff working on Pikachu sketches, a wireframe CGI model of a new bird Pokémon and various pieces of concept art (like emergency vehicles, a possible Water-type Gym and an all-in-one Pokémon Center), no other information was revealed regarding starters, legendaries or gameplay. However, two important announcements were made: Sun and Moon will be the first games in the franchise to be playable in Traditional and Simplified Chinese, and you will be able to import Pokémon from Red, Blue and Yellow on 3DS Virtual Console to Sun and Moon via Pokémon Bank! Like previous titles, this will likely be a one-way trip, so get ready to fill up your Pokédexes.

More information will be trickling in from Japan in the months to come. Some of the biggest news will likely be coming during the Pokémon National and World Championships this Summer, so stay tuned, Trainers!

I think the one question hanging on everyone's minds about sending Pokémon from Generation I all the way to Generation VII is: "What happens if you try to send a Missingno.?" – REBECCA



THE FIRST NEW 'MON

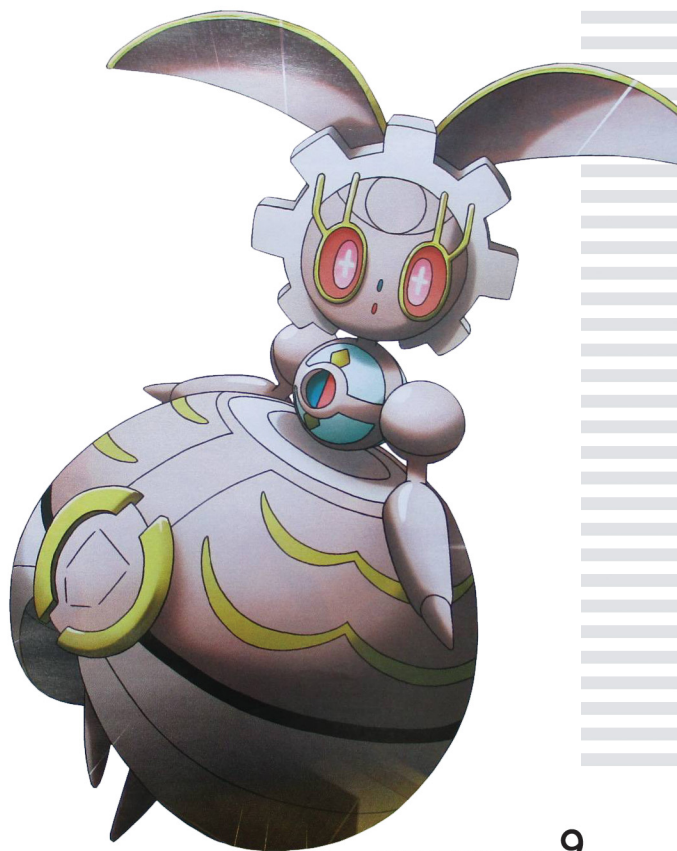
Say hello to the new Mythical, Magearna!

ON VALENTINE'S DAY, less than two weeks before the official reveal of Pokémon Sun and Pokémon Moon, we got our first glimpse of the first Pokémon from Generation VII: Magearna, a new Mythical Pokémon! It will debut alongside Volcanion in this Summer's Pokémon movie, now titled "Volcanion and the Mechanical Magearna."

The movie will involve Ash and the gang encountering Volcanion, the guardian of a faraway Pokémon sanctuary. While it distrusts humans, it's forced to work together with Ash as it searches for Magearna. Magearna, meanwhile, has been kidnapped by corrupt members of the mechanical Azoth Kingdom, who wish to use the power of its "Soul Heart" to take over the kingdom (probably the world, too – you know the drill).

Described as the "Artificial Pokémon" and said to have been built by human hands over 500 years ago, Magearna appears to be Steel type, but it wouldn't be surprising if it was dual typed – possibly with Fairy. Its metallic design incorporates gears, wires, blades and a bell-shaped "skirt" that resembles a pink and white Poké Ball. Since it's a Mythical Pokémon, it won't be catchable in normal gameplay, but will likely be distributed either wirelessly or through code cards available at retailers.

The dubbed Pokémon movies usually come out about half a year after being released in Japan, so we might be able to add Magearna to our Pokédex right around the time Sun and Moon are released worldwide! – REBECCA



COLLECTOR'S CORNER



JAKKS PACIFIC'S VAST SELECTION

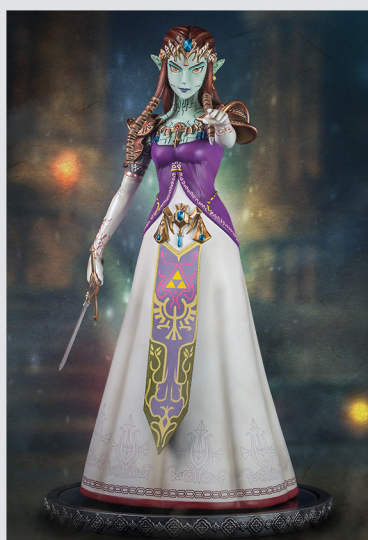
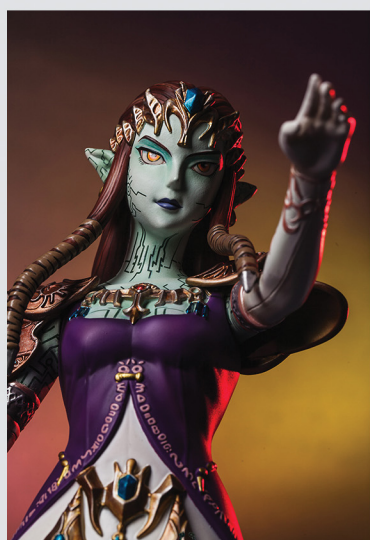
Weapons and figures of all shapes and sizes await you.

JAKKS PACIFIC HAS been no slouch in using their "World of Nintendo" license to create toys based on several different Nintendo franchises. Their original focus may have been the Super Mario series, but it didn't take them long to see that The Legend of Zelda could also be a big moneymaker.

The first Zelda-inspired item to appear was the Skyward Sword Link figure, followed closely by the large and small Wind Waker Ganondorfs. Then the real flood came, with the 8-bit Link, several mini figures, costume props and giant 20" Links.

Wave 2 of the Microland series brought us playsets and micro figures based on Wind Waker, and there are two Link plushes as well. Missing from the picture at left is the Outset Island Pajama Link plush – it's been very hard to procure all of these items at retail due to Jakks Pacific's erratic distribution and limited stock. Many have turned to auction sites to complete the full set, and it's a shame that Jakks Pacific hasn't been able to meet demand.

On the horizon are Adult Zelda and Skull Kid 4" figures, a Skull Kid 2.5" figure and a Tingle plush. These are some of the highest quality mass-produced Nintendo toys that have ever been released worldwide, and needless to say, Zelda fans are waiting with bated breath to see what Jakks will come up with next!



THE PRINCESS POSSESSED

Zelda's most frightening form, now in figure form.

ESSENTIALLY RETROACTIVELY BECOMING the exclusive version of First 4 Figures' original Twilight Princess Zelda statue from 2014, the new "Ganon's Puppet Zelda" has been announced at the same \$350 price point its predecessor held two years ago. Set to arrive in the third quarter of this year, this new Zelda statue doesn't feature many differences from the older, "normal" Zelda aside from her possessed evil appearance and a raised arm. She still holds her sword – but in a slightly more aggressive position – and there are minor changes in the folds of her dress.

This subtlety has once again caused some controversy for the F4F team – this is essentially the same as a color variant action figure, but at this price, collecting what essentially boils down to a repaint is tough to swallow. One odd note is the website showing Zelda at 17" and Puppet Zelda at 15" tall, so apparently being controlled by a hex costs you some height as well? Until we see the two side by side it will be difficult to state whether both are worth owning together, but until then collectors need to decide whether to allow First 4 Figures to possess their wallet or not.

RAREST OF THE RARE

Only on sale at a pharmacy?

ONE PARTICULARLY FRUSTRATING figure to collect in the Jakks Pacific line has been the elusive Walgreens-exclusive White Link 2.5" figure. I know what you're thinking: What is Walgreens doing with an exclusive World of Nintendo toy? Having visited several of these drug stores in the hunt for the elusive character, it seems that Walgreens is expanding its toy section to include more collectibles and fewer cheap toy impulse buys. This Link figure also comes in a case with a Black-and-White 8-bit Mario and an iridescent Star Power 8-bit Mario – the trio has become the new "holy trinity" of Nintendo collectors, as they are much harder to acquire than the already difficult-to-get regular Jakks Pacific World of Nintendo figures. Walgreens has supposedly been carrying the Jakks Pacific line in a few stores for a while, but it definitely took this set to make that known!





Collector's Corner is compiled by Brett Martin, the world record holder for the largest collection of Nintendo memorabilia on Earth. For more cool collectibles and information on how to order from import shops, visit his site, The Video Game Memorabilia Museum, at videogamemmm.com



A FIGMA BETWEEN WORLDS

Check out this amazingly poseable, accessory-packed new Link!

EVER SINCE I first saw the art from *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* back in the '90s, I've always wanted an action figure in that style. While we never got that figure, this new Figma based on the Link from *A Link Between Worlds* should fit the bill nicely.

This adorable figure comes in two flavors: a regular and a "DX" version. The regular version is around \$45 and comes with what you'd expect from a Figma from Good Smile Company: a figure stand, a couple of expressions to swap out (serious vs. smiling) and a couple of accessories, which in this case would of course be the Hylian Shield and Master Sword. As a bonus, it also comes with a mini poster with the wall-merged Link. The DX version adds in a rupee, pot, bomb, Hookshot, Ravio's bracelet, a lost Maiamai, the Tornado Rod and different hands to hold them all for only \$10 more. Totally worth it!



FROM THE FESTIVAL

In-the-works items revealed!

THE WONDER FESTIVAL is an expo that happens twice a year in the Makuhari Messe in Chiba, Japan. It's a place for Japanese toy makers, talented fans and press to meet and see what everyone else is up to in the bustling business of Japanese figures, art, toys, plushes and more. Each year, we see the number of Nintendo-related items presented increase, and this year there were six high-end figures on the show floor.

We saw Samus and Zero Suit Samus Figmas, as well as Nendoroids of Meta Knight and Elise (from *Fire Emblem Fates*). But this is a *Zelda* Collector's Corner! A new Skyward Sword Link statue was shown painted – which means it may be close to production – and a Wind Waker *Zelda* Nendoroid debuted unpainted, but still stunning. The detail on both is amazing, and the Nendoroid line seems perfect for the Toon *Zelda* design.

While I can't give you dates, I can tell you that previous Nintendo figures in both the Figma and Nendoroid lines were some of the hottest selling figures for Good Smile!





MIGHTY DELAY No. 3

Mighty No. 9 missed its release date . . . again.

THE IRONY IS not lost on us – and, in fact, we suspected it might happen – but sure enough, the game we chose to put on the cover of our last issue entitled “Worth the Wait” is now making us all wait even longer. Yes, Mighty No. 9 has suffered its third major delay.

Is anyone really even surprised at this point, though? Some retailers, maybe, who had the game’s planned February 9 launch date entered into their sales systems and had already been taking pre-orders with that date in mind. But now, the developers haven’t even given a new date for fans to look forward to – just a nebulous “Spring 2016.”

If you haven’t been keeping track, that will put the game’s launch at about one full year after its original target of April 2015. It was delayed from that timeframe back to September 15 of last year, and then delayed a second time to the February 9 date we looked forward to in our last issue. Now, we’ll *maybe* be able to play it before E3? Who can even say?

Not Keiji Inafune, it seems, who’s running out of apologetic words to send out to the game’s thousands of Kickstarter backers. “Unfortunately, this is all a result of miscalculations on the part of us, the development staff,” Inafune said in his latest mea culpa. “As a result, our fans who have been looking forward to Mighty No. 9 have been forced to wait for over half a year longer than expected, and for that we are sincerely sorry.”

Perhaps worse than the seemingly endless wait for this one game to launch is the fact that the whole situation has drained fans’ confidence in Kickstarter as a platform for funding ambitious new game projects. Hopefully other Kickstarted titles from notable creators – like Playtonic’s Yooka-Laylee and Koji Igarashi’s Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night – will restore some of that faith.

We dedicated a whole magazine issue to the topic of game delays, and I guess there’s really no better game that could have been on the cover after all! After this incredible debacle finally comes to an end, I truly hope the finished product does end up being worth the wait. – LUCAS



STILL MORE SMASH TO COME?

Rumor has it that “Super Smash Bros. NX” is on the way.

THE RUMORS ARE flying around for Nintendo’s NX, and all of them sound pretty crazy interesting! For one, there’s a strong suggestion that the next Zelda will launch both on the Wii U and the NX, in a similar fashion to Twilight Princess showing up on both the Wii and GameCube so many years back. But another potential NX release that’s being whispered across the winds of the rumor mill is another Super Smash Bros. release, which, depending on the system’s capabilities, could be a genius move.

I mean, first off, how many people would rebuy Super Smash Bros., for the right price, if it provided all of the DLC and fixins that the Wii U edition brought? It’s crazy to think that all of the add-ons are over (at least according to Sakurai), but as far as characters and stages go, the track record has been insanely good. Pretty much every piece of Smash DLC is worth buying, and a potential NX “Game of the Year” version, so to speak, would encourage everyone from newcomers to double-dippers to partake. Any special features like cloud-saving, the ability to carry over 3DS or Wii U data and maybe even cross-platform play would be the sweet, sweet cherry on top.

While said rumors haven’t been exact (nothing precisely indicates whether it will be a port or a sequel), it would be hard to believe that Sakurai and his crew would have another brand-new Smash for us so soon, given that the NX is supposedly going to launch sometime in 2016. Of course, this is presupposing that it’s coming soon, and that another team wasn’t contracted out for a potential spin-off of sorts. Maybe we’ll find out more at E3? Either way, it’s a great time to be a Smash fan!

I hope when the NX does launch, it has more than just a few ports – and comes out of the gate stronger than Wii U! – CHRIS



Yeah!

A new Pokémon gen this year? I’m totally in!



Unyeah...

Mighty No. 9 keeps on not getting released.

GAME FORECAST

A quick look at the biggest games coming in the months ahead.



THE POKÉMON BRAND has been applied to RPGs, puzzlers, roguelikes, racers and an on-rails shooter (with a camera, not a gun), but there's still new territory left to explore, as Pokkén Tournament proves. This fighting game starring Pikachu and his Pocket Monster pals is on its way to stores as this magazine's on its way out the door, and our review is in progress for Issue #21. In the meanwhile, check out the full roster on Page 33!

ALSO LIKELY TO show up on a store shelf before this issue appears in your physical mailbox is the latest Olympics title starring Mario and Sonic, but only the 3DS version – the Wii U edition isn't set to arrive until closer to the opening of the Games themselves later this Summer. We may hold off on coverage until then, to let them go head to head.



OUR COVER GAME for this issue is Hyrule Warriors Legends, the new, updated 3DS edition of 2014's Hyrule Warriors on Wii U. Thanks to the expert battlefield tactics of our own Daan Koopman, we've got a full review ready for you starting on Page 64 – and we'll continue to cover this one in future issues, as Nintendo's confirmed a new season of DLC will be expanding its content even further through the upcoming months!

IT FEELS LIKE it's been a long wait for this follow-up to the well-received Bravely Default, as it's been on sale in Japan since last April 23 – but it'll be coming in under the wire of the one-year mark when it goes on sale in North America this April 15. We're offering one lucky winner a free copy, so be sure to answer the Player's Poll questions this time!

BRAVELY SECOND END LAYER



AND SPEAKING OF long waits, the one for the sadly delayed Star Fox Zero is finally coming to an end as well. Rumors swirled that this new Wii U sequel in the venerable starfighting series might get hit with a second delay after the first that pushed it out of the 2015 holiday season, but Nintendo's confirmed that it is on its way on April 22. We've got one last preview for you on Page 29, and then our full review will fly your way next time!

FINALLY, HERE'S A game that I'm going to get and then immediately hand over to my nieces Abby and Claire – an all-new Art Academy sequel filled with tutorials on how to draw your favorite Disney characters! I already know they'll be giddy to see the likes of Eeyore, Olaf and Mickey Mouse come to life on the 3DS touchscreen. It arrives on May 13.



The Spring lineup is solid, but I can already feel the excitement beginning to build for this year's E3 and the full reveal of Nintendo's new NX! Who knows what mysteries await us in Los Angeles this year, and what games we'll be looking forward to on this list by the end of 2016! The Legend of Zelda for Wii U is one of the only ones we know about so far! – LUCAS

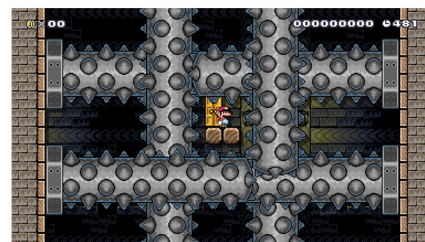


& DLC!

Upcoming add-on content.

SUPER MARIO MAKER

WITH THE SMASH roster now complete on Wii U and 3DS, the immediate momentum for Nintendo's DLC is swinging away from paid add-on content and back to free updates. Luckily, Super Mario Maker's got us covered in that regard, as the game just keeps expanding its options, and at no additional cost! The newest update is the most game-changing so far, as Nintendo has finally responded to the fans' requests for keys and locked doors – they're now available as a new alternative version of P Switches and P Doors, if you give them a shake. With the keys, you can now make boss battles completely mandatory! (Most boss encounters could be skipped prior to this.) In addition, Coins can now be shaken up to become Pink Coins, useful both as support for exploration-encouraging levels and also as another method of earning a key – you can make it so a key appears only after all the Coins have been gathered. Finally, Skewers are back!



NINTENDO HAD DROPPED some hints that the planned end of DLC support for Splatoon in January might not end up being the end after all, and sure enough there's more content coming! New, remixed combinations of some existing weapons are on their way courtesy of everyone's favorite horseshoe crab, Sheldon. Get ready for options like the Wasabi Splattershot and Fresh Squiffer!





REST

O



the sitcom starring a final boss and an obnoxious '90s video game mascot

ONCE THERE WAS
A SACRED POWER...



... KNOWN AS...
THE TRI-FOURS

FOR EONS, THESE SQUARES OF SILVER
WATCHED OVER US...



GUIDING US...
PROTECTING US...

GIVING US HOPE...



...BUT BY FAR,
THEIR GREATEST
BLESSING...

I dunno if that's their
GREATEST blessing...

...WAS BEING
SUPER EASY
TO DRAW!!!



NO! SERIOUSLY!
THIS IS THE BEST!
OH MAN, I BET THEY'D BE SO EASY
TO MODEL IN 3D TOO!
I'M PUTTING THESE THINGS IN
EVERY GAME NOW!!!



DOWNLOAD

IT HAS BEGUN

Miitomo's arrival heralds Nintendo's expansion to mobile.

WE NEVER THOUGHT it would happen – and Nintendo denied it for years – but we are now on the verge of Nintendo's mobile rollout, and there's still very little known about what that rollout will entail. As this magazine is arriving in your hands, chances are that Miitomo has launched or will launch imminently, as I'm staring at a "March 2016" release date on the official website while writing this. We're all still waiting on the pre-registration emails that we signed up for when the Miitomo website went live this past February 17 to see when we can play.

At the same time that Miitomo's arriving on the scene, the new Nintendo Account website has also launched – its aim is to bridge mobile and console data via a cloud service. This service comes to us through DeNA, the company Nintendo partnered with last year to aid with mobile game development and other mobile services. There was worry about a mad rush for usernames for the launch, but your account name can be changed easily and is not locked to one person. It instead links separate accounts, like your Nintendo Network ID, Facebook, Twitter and Google+. More info has slowly come out about what the account can do, and as we expected, it's all about access. Nintendo will allow purchases on their site that will automatically download to your Wii U or 3DS through the account. Then, Nintendo can send notices about DLC or other news related to that title, and "gifts" that enhance the game in some small way. They'll even create a special sale on your birthday, specifically catered to you! Cloudsaves and being able to download games already purchased to other devices are also possible.

The account ties into Nintendo's new rewards program as well. We had been in the dark for quite a while since Club Nintendo officially closed on July 31 last year, and we were promised a new and shiny rewards program alongside the launch of the mobile frontier. Nintendo released info about the My Nintendo rewards program in an investor briefing, outlining rewards for both buying and playing games. Also starting in March, this program will launch in 39 different countries in many different languages.

The idea is to once again earn points by purchasing Nintendo products, but the focus seems to be on digital content being served up as the rewards this time, rather than the physical goods Club Nintendo was known for. They showed a presentation slide that mentioned "original merchandise" back in late October of last year, but the updated information released this February may have nixed that. That's no surprise, as the amount of tangible merchandise in the Club Nintendo program dwindled substantially toward the end, and often the best products were in the region that you weren't. The points will manifest themselves in Gold and Platinum tiers, keeping with that theme

from Club Nintendo.

Platinum Points are earned by playing the apps, logging in to the Nintendo eShop and by meeting ominous "special requirements" that were not detailed. These points can then be spent on digital goods like wallpapers and 3DS themes. Nintendo said that Platinum Points would be "for fun," so we can largely expect frivolous things to spend them on.

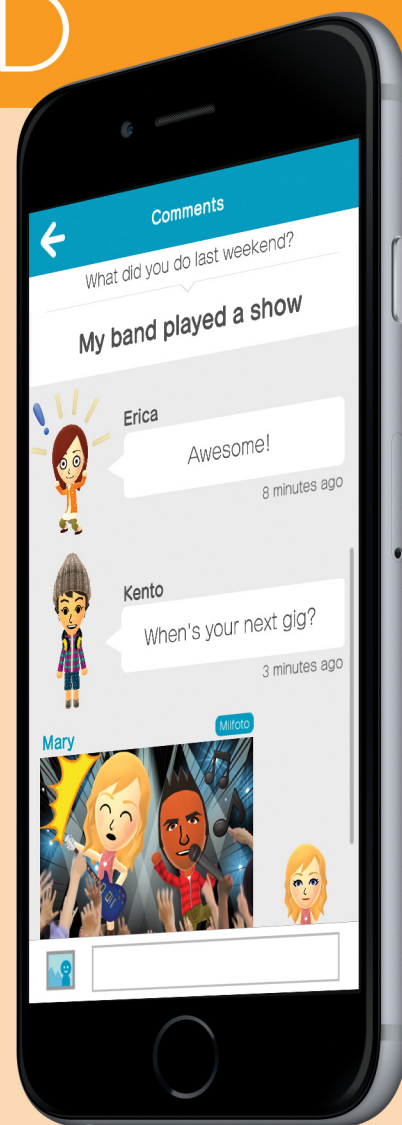
Gold Points are earned through the actual purchase of content. These will gain you discount coupons for your next purchase of digital games or software. There's been no mention of whether either of these types of points will have any connection to physical goods, whether they be retail games or Nintendo merchandise. This shines the light on an already glaring problem with lack of storage space on Nintendo systems: If they now expect us to download all of our games digitally to receive rewards, where will we store them all? (Also, being the guy in control of the Collector's Corner, it is quite disheartening to see a complete lack of new physical memorabilia.)

The game that Nintendo and DeNA have chosen to kick off the entire system is Miitomo, which is a social media engine with Miis as the face and gameplay possibly reminiscent of Tomodachi Life. It's what nobody was expecting, given the two companies: the breadth of Nintendo's characters plus the powerhouse that brought us mobile blockbusters such as *Rage of Bahamut*, *Godus* and... *Bingo Partyland*? But it may make more sense than you'd expect. Nintendo has had Miis since 2006, and the Miiverse took them to the next level – while DeNA's Mobage platform has 30 million users and acts as a portal and social network for their mobile games.

Miitomo will be available at launch in eight languages in 16 countries, which is an impressive start. Once you start the app, you'll be asked to create a Mii and answer some opinion questions. The premise is learning more about your friends through these questions, but it hasn't been made clear exactly how you'll connect with friends, apart from linked accounts in your Nintendo Account. Mii customization will be possible through in-app purchases. (So that hat you got by playing *Find Mii*? It may be \$0.99 if you want it in Miitomo.) Nintendo will most likely send bonuses just for playing too, introducing the concept and then directing users to the in-app shop.

Another activity to do in Miitomo is taking Miifotos. In Miifotos, you can pose your Mii in a scene with various stamps and backgrounds and then add captions with various fonts. You can even pull from your own photos to use as backgrounds! These photos can then be shared across the social media universe.

Miitomo looks like a fun start – but everyone's eyes are peeled for what the next app will be. – **BRETT**



DOWNLOAD THE APP!

If you want to step into Nintendo's next chapter of downloadable games with Miitomo, you'll need a mobile device running either Apple's iOS or Google's Android operating systems. Hopefully you've got access to one of those already!



FAST-TRACKED FOLLOW-UP

Freedom Planet was a hit – so Freedom Planet 2's on the way!

FOLLOWING THE RELEASE of the Sega Genesis-era inspired Freedom Planet on the Nintendo eShop for Wii U in late 2015, the team at Galaxy Trail has announced that a sequel is on the way! Using the experience gained from their work and the positive reception to the original game, the developers are planning to retain such elements as the core gameplay of momentum-based combat, the three heroines we were introduced to before, the balance of high-speed segments with exploration and the divide between a story-oriented Adventure Mode and the straight-up gameplay focus of the Classic Mode.

While Freedom Planet 2 will retain much of what made the original great, there will also be some forward-looking changes as well. This is most immediately evident in the new character designs, which see the three protagonists grown up a little, with new pixel art to reflect this. Rather than looking like members of Sonic's extended family, the proportions now make the characters feel a little more reminiscent of some of those found in some of Inti Creates' titles, like Mega Man Zero or Azure Striker Gunvolt –

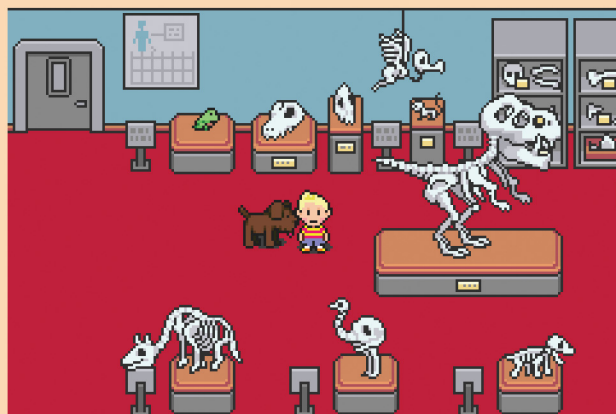
but with an anthropomorphic twist.

Other new features include difficulty customization, wherein you'll be able to spend gold gems to temporarily tweak elements such as the number of lives or how much damage the characters do. Guarding will allow you to block and parry attacks, while Revivals allow you to continue right where you left off at the cost of one extra life, though you'll only receive a portion of your life meter back (along with a brief period of invulnerability) in order to deal that one final blow to the boss.

On the story front, an ancient water dragon from this world's oldest and deadliest war has been freed from her crystal imprisonment. Known as Merga, this villain holds a dark secret over the leaders of Avalice's three kingdoms, driving them to the brink of war – and dividing Lilac, Carol and Milla between sides!

Several voice actors are returning, but there are new ones involved, too. Among these is none other than Christopher Sabat, who fans of Dragon Ball Z may recognize as the voice of Vegeta, Piccolo and many more.

Here's hoping Freedom Planet 2 hits Wii U (or NX?), and soon! – **DAVID**



IS IT HAPPENING?!

Rumor has it Mother 3 is finally on its way in English!

OK, I KNOW. Deep breaths, everyone. It's possible that it's another false alarm. But, that said . . .

. . . Mother 3 is supposedly, finally, going to be getting an official English language release.

Again, not officially confirmed. Yet. But Mother 3 – the sequel to the game we know as EarthBound here in the States – was first released back on April 20, 2006, and rumor has it that Nintendo of America is planning to mark that milestone by finally making the megaton announcement that the game is going to be made available in English.

Who knows – maybe they'll put it on sale in the Wii U eShop that same day? It's going to be a Wednesday, and stranger things have happened.

. . . Well, maybe not anything stranger has ever happened, actually – because if Mother 3 does indeed go on sale officially in English after a 10-year wait, it will be a moment that caps off a grand tale of fan frustration, disappointment and determination that spans that entire decade – and reaches back even into the decade before that, when we first got a look at the ultimately cancelled "EarthBound 64" that was in development in the '90s.

Former Nintendo Force staffer Emily Rogers was one of the voices in the mix breaking this news through social media in early February, and her posts might have been disregarded as just the latest in a long line of hopeful wishes for an official Mother 3 release had it not been for the fact that other sources, like Eurogamer, also came forward to back up her claims and say that they, too, had heard the same whispers. Nintendo was apparently so impressed with the incredible sales of EarthBound's Wii U Virtual Console release and Smash Bros. making Mother 3's hero, Lucas, more well-known to American audiences that they finally pulled the trigger on a translation!

We'll have much, much more in our next issue! Stay tuned! – **LUCAS**





INTRODUCING UNDERTALE

Over a million players have already been enamored with this seemingly simple RPG on PC, and it may be heading into the Wii U eShop next!

I HAVE A tradition: Every time we publish a new issue of NF Magazine, for a handful of days after it's been sent off to the printers but before we really start diving into working on the next one, I let myself play a new game just for fun. Not to review it. Not because I plan to write anything about it at all – just a game that I'm interested in playing because I want to continue being interested in games beyond them being "work."

A couple of months ago, for the first time ever, the game I picked to play just for fun was not a Nintendo title. Rather, I found myself compelled to see for myself just what it was that was so special about the new PC RPG I kept hearing so much about: Undertale.

This game's only been on sale as a download from Steam since last September, but it quickly captured the hearts of hundreds of thousands of gamers – seriously, if you've been anywhere near the corners of the Internet where gamers hang out in the last six months, you have to have come across people singing Undertale's praises. So I dove in! And I'm incredibly thankful I did.

I'll try to walk a tightrope here and not stray into anything spoiler-ish, because Undertale tells a tale that's much more impactful the less you know about it going in. I was lucky in that while I'd heard the game was good, I hadn't heard why. So feel free to

skip reading the rest of this piece and preserve as much mystery for yourself as you can!

... Still here?

OK. Undertale's an RPG, first and foremost. You play as a human child who's accidentally fallen through a hole in a mountainside and tumbled down underground to land in a subterranean world of monsters. These aren't "monsters" like vicious beasts, though – they're mostly comical NPCs who'd just as likely tell you a joke as attack you. Your quest is to find a way to return to human civilization, but to do that you'll need to somehow pass through the magical barrier that's keeping the monsters' realm cut off from the outside world.

There's a battle system in Undertale, naturally, but it's totally different from the combat you'd see in most RPGs – there's no automatic sword-slashing after you pick an option from a menu, for instance. No, attacking is an active affair, somewhat similar to the Mario & Luigi series in that you need to skillfully time your button presses in order to do more damage to your foes. That's not even the cool part, though! The best part of battles is when the enemies attack you, as you then get flung into a kind of dodging minigame – the baddies' assaults are visualized like bullets in a shoot-'em-up game, and you're in control of a little heart in the center trying to avoid them all.

It's a blast! And seriously funny, too, because every enemy attack represents their personality somehow – like Froggit there, whose attacks are represented by a little white frog who tries to hop around and collide with your heart.

The characters are incredible outside of battle as well – you've probably seen fan art floating around of the skeleton brothers Sans and Papyrus, but they're just two of the truly memorable cast members.

And the music? Absolutely spectacular. YouTube remixers have been having a field day coming up with new riffs on each and every track.

So, why all the gushing over this game that isn't even on a Nintendo platform? Well, because that may not be the case for long! Undertale was created almost entirely by one man, Toby Fox, and he's come right out and said that he's been in touch with Nintendo to discuss the possibility of porting the game to the eShop. That admission came in response to a bit of Twitter intrigue earlier this year, as an employee of Nintendo of America tweeted at Fox to ask him for assistance with a programming problem, and people put two and two together in about two seconds.

There are some challenges to getting Undertale to work on Wii U, as it was built in Game Maker and can't be directly ported – and there are also some aspects of its design that leveraged the PC platform in particular, so some creativity would be needed to adapt those elements. Still, it would be incredible if Undertale arrived on a Nintendo platform! I'd replay it again in a heartbeat.

If and when new news breaks on the potential port, you know we'll let you know! – **LUCAS**





ELECTRIC INVESTIGATIONS

Crime in the Pokémon world? **Great Detective Pikachu** is on the case!

IT'S BEEN OVER two years now, but you may recall that back at the end of 2013, The Pokémon Company revealed that they'd been working on a new game concept called "Great Detective Pikachu." (And if you do remember that, it's probably because your mind is going back to the memory of the creepy facial recognition software the studio was applying to Pikachu's 3D model at the time, as they worked to make his mouth movements look natural so that he'd be able to speak human languages for the first time.) Well, it took them a long while, but the game was finally completed – and it's now gone on sale in the 3DS eShop in Japan.

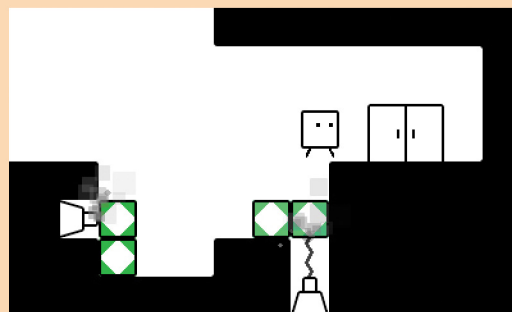
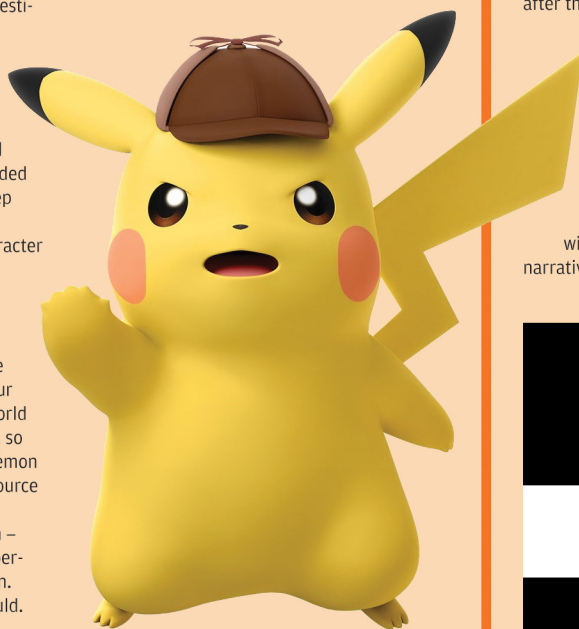
As promised in its initial reveal, Great Detective Pikachu casts you as a human who works alongside a talking Pikachu to investigate crime scenes and bring villains – both human and Pokémon – to justice. You may have to interrogate a Murkrow to get a hot tip, or chase down and arrest a gang of mischievous Aipom. It's a world in which humans and Pokémon live and work together; a blended community that seems like it's a half-step outside the normal Pokémon reality.

Of course, the fact that the main character is a Pikachu who both talks and thinks he's Sherlock Holmes should have been our first clue that this might be a bit of a side story to the established Pokémon "lore," as it were. In fact, if anything, the setting of Rhyme City most resembles our real-world Boston – where last year's World Championships for Pokémon took place, so perhaps some key members of The Pokémon Company had been scoping it out as a source of inspiration for some time!

This Pikachu doesn't just talk, though – he's got a full-blown, aggressive, adult personality. He whistles at attractive women. Human women! He'd date them if he could.

Whether he'll get the chance to may depend on how well you play your role as the human in the partnership, though. You're cast as a boy named Tim Goodman who's arrived in Rhyme City looking for your missing father. You bump into Pikachu early on, and figuring that a private eye might be a good ally in helping you track down your Dad's whereabouts, you join forces with the little Electric-type and become his agency's junior employee. (Which also means you're his wingman with the ladies.)

No word yet on when the game will leave Japan, but it may take a while for Nintendo to convince Danny DeVito to voice Pikachu. (OK, that's just some fans' wishful thinking, but it would be pretty incredible.) – **LUCAS**



QBBY RETURNS

The sequel to **BOXBOY!** adds one more box.

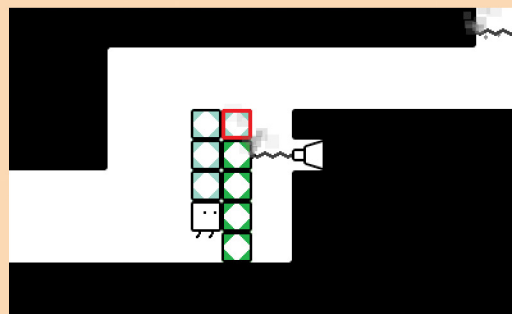
MUCH LIKE HOW the original came out of nowhere, Hako Boy! Mō Hito Hako (roughly translated from Japanese as BOXBOY! One More Box) was surprise-launched on the Japanese 3DS eShop in early January. From the same team at HAL Laboratory, BOXBOY!'s sequel is more of the same puzzle/platforming goodness from the original. The biggest difference this time is that, as the subtitle explains, you have another box – so the puzzles have another element and give you another tool to work with.

Instead of just creating one box at a time, you can now create two. It's a simple, fun twist that allows for more creative and unique solutions to puzzles. The structure is very reminiscent of the previous game, as you go through a surprisingly large number of short worlds, solving puzzles. The early ones are a little more tutorial-focused, but not to the same degree as the first game.

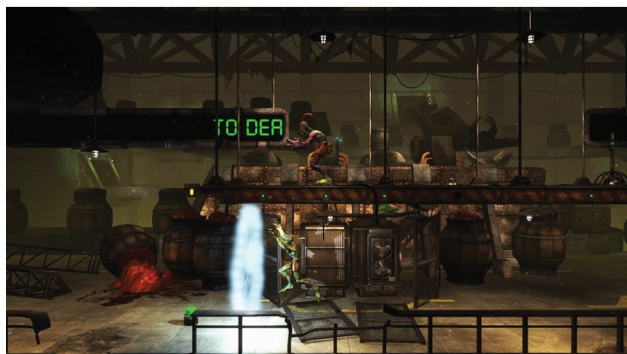
The coolest part about the BOXBOY! sequel, though, is how it continues the silent but poignant story. At the end of the first game, Qbby had brought color to his world – but had to give up his friends in the process. It was weirdly deep and heavy for a light game, but it was heartwarming. The sequel picks up with our square-shaped hero emerging from his slumber to rescue his friends and solve more puzzles.

Content-wise, it has about the same level count as the original, which was a shocking amount that kept on unlocking more even after the credits rolled! The humorous costumes return, and if you played the original, you can unlock all of the ones from there when you boot up the game.

As of this writing, there's no word on a Western release yet – but it might be out on the eShop by the time you read this article, as the original game was only announced for North American and European release mere days before launch! Whenever it comes out, BOXBOY! 2 will likely be another must-buy for 3DS owners, especially if you liked the first one. It's filled with fun puzzles, novel mechanics and a intriguing silent narrative. And it's got one more box! – **NEAL**



REVIEWS



Abe's Adventures in Odddysee

ODDWORLD: NEW 'N' TASTY

THE ODDWORLD FRANCHISE

has been around for quite some time, first coming onto the scene in the PlayStation 1 days – but loyal fans of Nintendo's systems haven't had many chances to enjoy it (aside from a pair of Game Boy releases back around the turn of the century). For those who follow the series, it seems like its adventures would make perfect sense for Nintendo's core home consoles – with their casts of quirky characters that bring unique gameplay and fantastic locations with them. Sadly, time and time again, Nintendo fans have been left in the dust. That is, until now!

Nearly 20 years after Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee debuted on the market, Nintendo fans are just now getting to experience the adventure through Oddworld: New 'n' Tasty. This revamped version of the original game still brings with it the same story, gameplay mechanics and cast of characters that appeared in the original outing – the "New 'n' Tasty" moniker comes from the inclusion of tweaked gameplay elements, new control options and a massive overhaul to the visuals. Abe's Oddysee originally used prerendered characters and backgrounds for its visual package. Thanks to the power of consoles today, Abe's first outing has gone fully polygonal, and looks gorgeous doing so.

While New 'n' Tasty might look like a traditional platformer at first,

there's actually a shocking amount of gameplay types going on behind the scenes. It's true that the very base mechanic focuses on running and jumping to avoid pitfalls, but it's the "how" of the gameplay that creates the different experiences. Believe it or not, stealth is a huge portion of the gameplay – Abe can sneak around on his tippy toes to quietly bypass enemies. He can also slink into the shadows and have enemies walk right by him unknowingly. These stealth aspects of the game aren't just thrown in to spice things up – they're absolutely crucial in navigating the landscape, and often completely necessary to complete an objective ahead of you.

More often than not, these objectives include working out platforming puzzles. Figuring out how to successfully navigate each area is where a lot of Oddworld's fun resides. Wild animals will lunge at you to try to steal your life. Gun-toting enemies are ready to fire on

you as soon as you make a sound. Levers and buttons surround Abe in various sections, and it's up to you to figure out what they do and how you can use them to your advantage. Motion sensors are ready to alert the authorities as soon as you make a false move, landmines are primed and ready to make Abe a distant memory and all of these are twisted together into some really engaging and head-scratching puzzles! You'll need both brains and twitch skills if you plan on making it to the end.

With all these elements in place, you'll quickly learn that Oddworld: New 'n' Tasty includes a lot of trial-and-error gameplay – you're simply going to have to die a few times to figure out how to make it through certain sections alive. There really isn't any other way to handle the gameplay, and for some, that's going to be a real turn-off. There seems to be a split between the older generation of gamers and today's gaming population. Older gamers are more than willing to welcome trial-and-

error as a game mechanic, as an element that is familiar and understandable for progression. New gamers tend to think trial-and-error gameplay is simply unfair and frustration-inducing. That right there is a key distinction you'll have to make before you jump into the game, as it could end up tickling your fancy or angering you in a big way!

Oddworld may have the bones of a game that's nearly two decades old, but it's still as wonderful today as it ever was back in the '90s. There's just so much to do and see; so much to learn about Abe and the world around him. The gameplay does provide a true challenge, but it's also equally rewarding. Plus, there are all kinds of reasons to replay New 'n' Tasty when you're done, thanks to multiple endings and tons of hidden friends to save! As long as you're not quick to anger, Oddworld is yet another Wii U eShop title that is absolutely well worth your time. – KEVIN C.

8.0



Wii U PUBLISHER: ODDWORLD INHABITANTS DEVELOPERS: JUST ADD WATER & NEPHILIM GAMES



The Last Additions Have Arrived

SUPER SMASH BROS. FOR WII U & NINTENDO 3DS: FINAL WAVE DLC

I CAN'T BELIEVE Super Smash Bros. is finally over. (Well, in terms of new Wii U and 3DS content, that is.) I somehow had the idea in my head that we'd keep getting DLC for it, with droves of new characters that were highly requested by the community. I never did get my personal pick of Waluigi, so here's hoping the next iteration will grant that wish. For now, on to the new DLC!

Corrin. Corrin, Corrin, Corrin. I had zero expectations for this character (who can be male or female), but man, am I impressed. Having played through all three Fire Emblem Fates versions, I have to say, I've really come around to him (or her). In fact, I'm a bigger fan of

Corrin than I ever was of Robin, as it pertains to both Fire Emblem and Smash. This is mostly because of the dragon element. Yep, Corrin has the blood of dragons, and that's represented beautifully with the character and the accompanying moveset. It's also great that Corrin is formidable, in the sense that I really feel like this dragon warrior will be a viable pick in tourneys in the future. The nuanced feature of the Neutral Special to essentially morph itself into different moves (you can opt for a quick blast or a stun, and alter its properties beyond that) is genius. Of course, this newcomer (whose game literally just released) was never any match for the one, the only, Bayonetta.

As the number one fan-requested character, Bayonetta is a show-stealer. Almost no one expected her to be released in the game, let alone get her own amiibo and the red carpet treatment. At this point, it's almost like she's a first-party character! Her moveset brilliantly repre-

sents her franchise's classic twitch action, and her combos remind me of a cleaner, more fun and flashier Ryu. It's still boggling as to how the developers were able to adapt all of these third-party characters so well, keeping their identities intact while staying faithful to each one's source material. Bayonetta's combos are fast and furious, and the "Witch Time" mechanic rewards players who skillfully dodge.

Although she is a bit risqué (Sakurai even admitted that they barely got her approved for an E-rated game), she isn't as over-the-top here as in her own games – which is perfectly fine. In some ways I actually like Corrin better mechanically, but the fact that Bayonetta comes with a rockin' new level (the Umbra Clock Tower Stage for a dollar more) puts her over the top as one of the best DLCs to date. Fans of the first Bayonetta game will recognize the locale, as a floating structure flies around a glorious battlefield of angels and demons. Even after playing it for the 10th time, I still couldn't believe that it was actually in Smash.

As for the costumes, as always, they're basically just . . . there. The Ashley outfit (of WarioWare fame) is extremely cute, as that series doesn't get nearly enough love (shout-out to the underrated Game & Wario), but that's really it for this last round of new Mii Fighter wardrobe options. I'm not a fan of the generic bionic get-up, or the Takamaru and Gil armor sets. On top of that, the Tails and Knuckles suits – which literally just make it seem like you're wearing their skins – are just so odd that they don't even fit with the rest of the scheme. I've never really been a fan of the Mii costumes anyway, but this set is one of the weakest offerings yet, especially for a final DLC drop.

While you can mostly ignore the bundles, picking up every character (and the extra level this time) is really the way to go. Every new fighter adds something to the table, and Nintendo and its partners have their work really cut out for them on the next iteration.

For now, I think this will go down as one of the best, if not *the* best, Nintendo fighters of all time. Although Melee will always have a special place in my heart from a competitive standpoint, I believe the designers struck the perfect balance here, taking the best parts of the series' past installments (including Brawl), and mixing them into one giant ball of fun. I'll be sad that there won't be any more Smash DLC on Wii U or 3DS, but I'll be playing with this cast for years to come! – **CHRIS**



DLC CHARACTERS: NINTENDO
DLC LEVELS: BANDAI NAMCO & SONO





The Sushi Shooter

SHUTSHIMI: SERIOUSLY SWOLE

SHUTSHIMI STARTS WITH a close-up on a strong-armed, serious-faced goldfish. This grizzled, aquatic war hero really wants to tell you his story, but he doesn't have the best memory – everything stored in his mind is broken into 10-second chunks. This fish's fractured capacity for recall is the secret ingredient that makes Shutshimi taste so special.

At first glance, Shutshimi may look like just another shmup about a gun-toting guppy taking on hordes of spectacled sharks, sassy squids and jilted jellyfish, but there's a twist: Each of the game's many stages only lasts for 10 seconds, as that's as much as our fishy friend can remember. From there, you're thrown into a shop where you have another 10 seconds to decide on which one of nearly a hundred potential stat-altering items to buy. The item descriptions are equally amusing and nonsensical, making it tough to guess what each possible pick-up might do. An electric guitar may give you a shotgun, or a ticket to a bouncy house, or flip your screen completely upside down! Multiple playthroughs will help you to learn what each item does, but with only 10 seconds to think about it, you may end up feeling as forgetful as the fish you're fighting as.

Herein lies the majesty of the Shutshimi recipe – it takes the anything-goes absurdity of WarioWare, peppers it with the randomized power-up system of The Binding of Isaac: Rebirth and serves it all up in a nautically themed sidescrolling action game.

Multiplayer's also in the mix, as up to four players can take on this madcap adventure at once, making for a hilarious, fast-paced party atmosphere. Multiple collectibles, modes and unlockables also offer plenty of reasons to keep coming back for more! While the game's a little light on enemy variety, and some of the jokes don't hold as much water after the 10th time, Shutshimi still manages to make a delicious dish out of what could have been a forgettable fish tale! – **JONATHAN**

8.0

Wii U PUBLISHER: CHOICE PROVISIONS
DEVELOPERS: NEON DEITY GAMES



The Foundation of a New Tale

MINECRAFT: STORY MODE – EPISODE 1: THE ORDER OF THE STONE

OPEN-WORLD EXPLORATION and creative crafting serve as two of the foundations of Minecraft. Meanwhile, plot is basically nonexistent – players instead create their own legends while surviving a blocky world full of zombies, Creepers and spiders. But everything is flipped in Minecraft: Story Mode, a narrative-focused and respectable take on the hugely popular franchise by Telltale Games.

Instead of choosing where to mine or what to build in Minecraft: Story Mode, you select dialogue options that create branching narrative paths. It's similar to a Choose Your Own Adventure story.

The first episode of Minecraft: Story Mode, The Order of the Stone, follows Jesse (you choose either a male or female Jesse) and his ragtag group of friends (let's assume you picked male Jesse for pronoun purposes). And get this: They're fittingly all heading to a building contest at the onset. But quickly the simple setup leads to a world-changing event, wherein the cast must go from zeroes to heroes.

The plot for the premiere moves at a brisk pace, sharing similarities with family-friendly adventure movies and The Lord of the Rings. It doesn't take long for Jesse to get thrown outside of his comfort zone. He crosses paths with a rebel named Petra, who drags him (and by extension, his friends) out of his pedestrian life. It's fun and entertaining.

Minecraft: Story Mode also serves up quite a few good laughs. Telltale obviously enjoys playing with the franchise's tropes, as there's a building montage scene with Jesse that hits just the right notes.

The only downside to the plot is that a few characters come across as simply one-

dimensional in this first episode. For instance, Jesse's best friends, Olivia and Axel, share a lot of time on-screen – but I never felt like I truly knew them. Axel just comes across as a loyal meathead, while Olivia is likeable but bland. There doesn't seem to be too much going on under the surface with either of them. Hopefully, the rest of the series will round them out.

Another miss for Minecraft: Story Mode is when Telltale puts a bit more control into the hands of players. Jesse battles a bit in this premiere, along with traveling through dark woods and navigating a crowded expo. Handling the hero in these instances is cumbersome.

But the main portion of the adventure game is thankfully about the dialogue choices. This first episode presents well-written and thoughtful options. For instance, you can shape Jesse's personality in small but meaningful ways throughout. I made him a more empathetic person, but there are definitely options to create a more impudent and vengeful hero.

The dialogue options don't just affect Jesse, though. Your choices are also impacting the lives of others, and Telltale throws in tricky situations where choosing a side is required. Now, there isn't any circumstance that's too gut-wrenching in this premiere . . . but here's hoping things ramp up in later episodes.

Overall, The Order of the Stone bears a lot of weight as a narrative-heavy spin-off of Minecraft. For the most part, though, the first episode doesn't let that burden hold it down, as it succeeds with strong storytelling and captivating choices.

– **EVAN**

7.5

Wii U PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER:
TELLTALE GAMES



The Extended Edition

METROID: ZERO MISSION

IT'S HARD TO believe it took

nearly a year for Metroid: Zero Mission to arrive in North America's eShop after it appeared in Europe's and Japan's, but in a way, this inexplicable delay was somewhat justified. Like the Legend of Zelda series, Metroid is also celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, which makes the re-release of Zero Mission – a reworking of the very first Metroid game and one of the finest titles to grace the Game Boy Advance – a fitting way to celebrate the series' legacy.

Despite retelling the story of Samus' first encounter with Metroids, Zero Mission isn't so much a remake of the original game as it is a reimagining of it. The basic framework of that title remains in place, but it's been embellished with a number of new features. Perhaps the most welcome are the map stations, thanks to which you can navigate the labyrinthine depths of Zebes more easily than ever before. The planet itself has also undergone some noticeable changes, with several new areas to explore and new types of environmental puzzles to overcome. Likewise, Samus' repertoire has been expanded with a handful of power-ups that weren't present in the original NES title back in the '80s – such as the Power Grip and Speed Booster – giving her an even more varied suite of tools with which to tackle the planet's challenges.

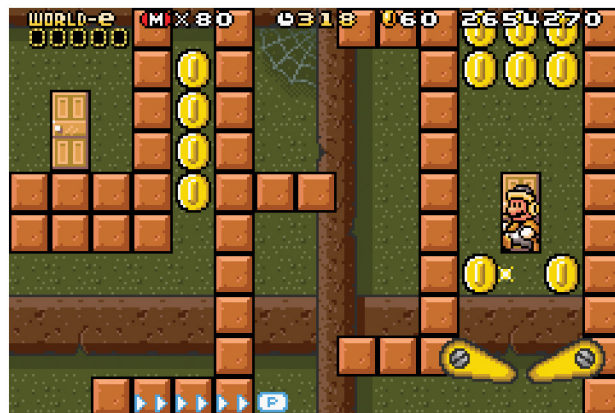
The most radical departure in Zero Mission, however, is the game's final sequence, in which Samus loses her Power Suit and must infiltrate the Space Pirate mothership without any of her signature abilities. This stands in stark contrast to the rest of the adventure; all of the firepower you've methodically amassed throughout the course of the game is stripped away in an instant, forcing you to rely on nothing but stealth to slip past the Pirates patrolling the ship's narrow corridors. It's a tense, slightly jarring change of pace from the rest of the title, but one that nonetheless adds a new dimension to the gameplay and further cements Zero Mission as its own distinct installment.

The only drawback to all of these new changes is that they reveal just how short the underlying adventure originally was. Even with the additional areas to explore, you'll be able to run through the game in roughly four or five hours (depending on how thoroughly you scour Zebes for power-ups). It's true that Metroid titles have never been known for their length, but even by those standards Zero Mission feels like it ends much too quickly. You will certainly be left wanting more!

Still, it would be a little disingenuous to bemoan the game's length when the entire experience is as well-crafted and engaging as it is here. Zero Mission remains one of the finest Metroid titles ever created and stands as the definitive version of Samus' first adventure. With bold, expressive visuals, tight controls and a wonderfully interconnected world to explore, Zero Mission is another Game Boy Advance masterpiece that belongs in every Wii U owner's digital library. – KEVIN K.

9.5

Wii U VC ORIGINAL RELEASE: GBA, 2004
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO



The e-Reader Returns

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4: SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

ANY TIME I get to talk about Super Mario Bros. 3 is a good time, and this is an especially exciting time to talk about it, especially for fans outside of Japan.

When Nintendo decided to bring the third installment of the Mario series into the Super Mario Advance series in 2003, they added all the bells and whistles the Game Boy Advance system could muster. On top of essentially porting the fantastic Super Mario All-Stars version of the original NES game, the developers added an entirely new section to the game that worked with the convoluted e-Reader accessory. (You could collect cards to slide into the e-Reader – like sliding a credit card at a checkout counter – to gain access to new features in the game.) Demo cards activated speedrun and trick videos, item cards could be used to fill up your inventory, switch cards did a variety of things (more on them later) and level cards granted access to brand-new levels in "World-e." The problem is, the peripheral was not popular enough in North America to justify releasing more than two sets of the cards here, thus locking off several features in the game that only Japanese fans had access to. And European players never had access to any of the e-Reader features!

Fast-forward to 2016, when this new VC version has just been released for Wii U. Included here, by default, are all 38 of the levels previously locked behind card scans! These fresh, creative takes on the SMB3 playstyle are easily worth the \$8 price of admission. Harder airships, Bowser's revenge, classic Mario levels, speedruns with shortened timers, puzzling mazes and quirky levels that add features from previous Mario games like capes and digging sand... World-e is like a playable Top 10 list of the Mario series' best features!

As fun as these levels are, there are still some missing aspects of the game that seem like they could have been implemented. You can still access the e-Reader menu, for instance, but nothing can be done there. So why not add a feature where any card could be virtually scanned? Then we could have gained access to the demos, items and, more importantly, add back in the seven switch cards. The two switch cards released in North America – an Orange Switch that allowed fireballs to create coins from defeated enemies, and the Blue/Green Switch that added vegetables to most levels – added some flavor. But the other five switches may be lost forever! Blue changed 1-Ups to 3-Up Moons, Yellow added Luigi's flutter jump (which is automatic with Luigi in World-e), Green added time, Cyan halved the P-Meter and Red replaced all enemies with harder ones. Also lost is the boomerang item – all other items are available through playing minigames in the Toad Houses, but the boomerang can now only be played with when encountering the Boomerang Bro with the blue boomerang and causing him to drop his weapon so you can then pick it up.

This release could have been even more amazing with extra dev time, but you have to give Nintendo credit for adding the e-Reader levels that were almost lost to time! – BRETT

9.5

Wii U VC ORIGINAL RELEASE: GBA, 2003
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO



High Noon

WILD GUNMAN

BACK IN ISSUE #13, Lucas talked about the compromises necessary in order to bring Duck Hunt – and indeed, all of Nintendo's Zapper titles – to the Wii U Virtual Console in an era without the CRT TV technology that made the originals possible. The biggest change was the inclusion of a targeting reticule to accommodate the use of the Wii Remote's pointer in place of the Zapper's main mechanics, and while it improves accuracy, it unfortunately takes away a key aspect of these games: the need to actually aim.

As such, Wild Gunman tends to suffer a bit. If you've watched Marty McFly play the game in Back to the Future Part II, then you know the premise is to basically keep your gun "holstered" by your side until the opposing Wild Gunman makes the call to draw. Reflexes are the name of the game here, as you're to quickly "draw" your gun and take out the opposing outlaw (Game A) or outlaws (Game B).

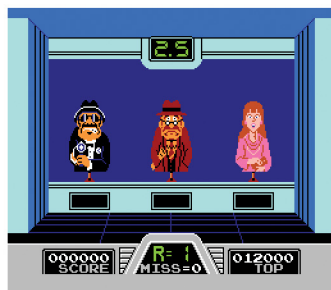
Unfortunately, the aiming without the reticule is iffy at best, leaving you to basically train your Wii Remote on your opponent and pull the trigger when he makes the call. It's still fun for a bit, but Game C feels like the overall better option, as gunmen appear in the windows of a saloon and you shoot when ready, rather than waiting for a call.

For what you get, the price is a little steep for a release that sadly doesn't quite recapture the spirit of the original. Still, the fun retro Nintendo cartoon graphics and simple rendition of the Funeral March are a nice time capsule for the company's earlier days, and there is some nostalgic fun to be found here in the short term.

And yes, you still have to use your hands. But it's not a baby's toy!
– DAVID

6.0

Wii UVC ORIGINAL RELEASE: NES, 1985
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO



Training Day

HOGAN'S ALLEY

OF THE THREE first-party NES Zapper titles now available through the Wii U Virtual Console, Hogan's Alley is the best of the lot. Unlike Duck Hunt, it relies on more than just quick reflexes – and unlike Wild Gunman, the spirit of the quick-draw isn't a part of the experience.

That isn't to say quick reflexes aren't a part of the game, but the key to this title is being able to quickly identify and react to what appears on the screen. Game A scrolls out three cut-out targets that you can't discern until they turn to face you. Within a given amount of time – ranging from mere seconds to fractions of a second – you've got to identify which of the three are threats and which are civilians, then react by shooting only the dangerous men. Game B is similar, but instead of a three-target gallery, you move through a simple re-creation of the eponymous FBI training ground, identifying and shooting the miscreant targets as they turn toward you, with ever-decreasing increments in which to react.

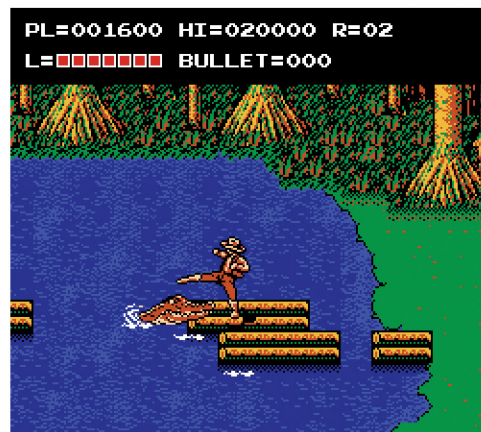
In either case, you can accumulate 10 misses before it's Game Over. What's more, as the timing grows slimmer, the reliance on the targeting reticule over your own aim and reflexes can go from being a crutch to a hindrance for those with naturally good aim.

Game C flips the script by tossing a series of cans into the air, requiring you to keep them aloft with repeated shots until they land in a designated target area. Here, the targeting reticule doesn't affect the experience too much – while it does make things a little easier than normal, the juggling act remains satisfyingly tricky to keep going.

Overall, the foundation on which Hogan's Alley was built keeps it a viable (albeit simple) classic title. – DAVID

7.0

Wii UVC ORIGINAL RELEASE: NES, 1985
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO



Born on the Bayou

THE ADVENTURES OF BAYOU BILLY

BAYOU BILLY MIGHT have been the first third-party game on Nintendo consoles to try to integrate console-specific "gimmicks" with the kind of "grown-up violence" that Nintendo usually shies away from. ZombiU, Red Steel and Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop are a few more recent examples of games that use this formula, but it's probably fair to say that Bayou Billy is the Grandpappy of them all. While about half the game is a standard sidescrolling beat-'em-up, the other two fourths are split between first-person light gun Zapper sections and fast-paced driving sequences. It's clearly a great concept, but sadly, this watery revival doesn't deserve much credence.

This combination makes for an interesting gauntlet of game design elements that somehow manage to be smaller than the sum of their parts. While the graphics remain a nice example of how to pull off realism on low-tech hardware and the music is catchy and cool, everything else feels half-baked.

The beat-'em-up sections will test your patience more than your skill. Nearly every enemy in the game has the same walking and attacking speed as Billy, so the only safe way to approach most fights is to anticipate when an enemy is about to walk into range of an attack, then stick your arm or leg out just before they get there in hopes that they'll walk into it. I love a tough tussle, but repeatedly waiting for a crocodile to maybe run into my foot is not my idea of a good time.

The light gun segments are similarly busted. Framerate issues can cause enemies to suddenly jump a character's length away from their prior position, requiring you to shoot at the place where you *think* they're going – not where they actually are. Worse still, these shoot-only sections give you a fixed amount of ammo, so even if you manage to stay alive, it's still Game Over if you run out of bullets.

As for the driving bits, it's great that Billy's jeep has guns built into the grill, but it corners like a bargain lot hooptie – making simple turns more dangerous than anything else you may face on the roads.

All these issues make Bayou Billy an ironically enjoyable return to the Crocodile Dundee era of corny, tough guy action in theory, but frequently just a chore in practice. – JONATHAN

5.0

Wii UVC ORIGINAL RELEASE: NES, 1989
PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: KONAMI

Back to the Beginning

POKÉMON RED, BLUE & YELLOW

FOR THE POKÉMON franchise's 20th anniversary, Nintendo and The Pokémon Company have given the 3DS Virtual Console some love and support after a long drought. On February 27, the original Pokémon Red, Blue and Yellow were re-released, and if the initial announcement in November's Nintendo Direct didn't intrigue you, the announcement that they'll be compatible with Pokémon Sun and Moon via Pokémon Bank should! The question remains: How well do a trio of 20-year-old Game Boy games hold up when ported to a system that's more suited to 3D models and instantaneous communication with someone halfway across the world? The answer: If you're willing to put in a lot more effort than the modern games, they hold up OK – but really, not very well.

Pokémon Red and Blue, which told the story of a Trainer battling his rival on his way to become Champion, were released first, followed by Yellow, which is more closely based on Ash Ketchum and Pikachu's adventures in the Pokémon anime. Along with Pikachu as your starter, Yellow also featured NPCs giving you the three Kanto starters, different rosters for Gym Leaders, and modified movesets for some Pokémon – like Charizard finally being able to learn Fly. Yellow also has Game Boy Color support, and Nintendo has thoughtfully unlocked the Surfing Pikachu minigame for all to play.

Thanks to a little tinkering under the hood, the three games have been brought into the 21st century by modifying the Link Cable functions to take advantage of the 3DS' local wireless. When you check in at the front desk of the Cable Club in a Pokémon Center, a menu on the lower screen opens where you're able to issue or receive invitations to trade or battle, and once you're connected, the process proceeds in the same way it originally did on the Game Boy. (Trading even keeps the same "traveling through the cable" graphics!) Battling and trading are smooth and fast, and I didn't experience any lags or hang-ups in the process. On the flip side, suspending the game and creating Restore Points have both been disabled; it's Nintendo's way of making the experience as authentic as possible.

After having spent a little over two years battling in the current generation (and 12 years before that with the previous iteration of the type chart), going back to the original strengths and weaknesses took a bit of effort. The battles have their quirks, too – there's plenty of documentation about how critical hit buffs do the

exact opposite of what they're supposed to do, and incorrect messages about the effectiveness of attacks, and don't get me started on how overpowered Psychic-type is compared to later generations! (Remember in the anime how everyone said Ghost Pokémon were super effective against Psychic Pokémon? THEY LIED.) There are also strange things that can happen in battle – when I first played Pokémon Blue many years ago, my Pikachu leveled up in battle and then attempted to evolve without a Thunder Stone. I've never been able to reproduce that since. Speaking of strange happenings in battle, you're able to perform two of the more infamous glitches – fighting Missingno. and catching Mew – the same way you would if you were playing the original. And you don't have to look under the truck!

Overall, the presentation can only be described as simple. Even the Pokémon on your team don't have individual sprites yet (except for your Pikachu and a few NPC Pokémon in Yellow.) Battles are fought on plain backgrounds, with a pixelated back sprite of you and your Pokémon in one corner and the opposing Pokémon in the other corner, and they throw animations and sound effects at each other. The PC system is text-based and stores items as well as Pokémon – you'll need it, as your Trainer no longer has his Bag of Holding with him, so you'll be making plenty of trips to drop off unneeded goods. While we still have the Day Care and the Name Rater, we don't have Move Deleters or Move Reminders – something I had to learn the hard way when my trigger finger got a little too itchy and my Pikachu forgot Thundershock.

Are these games worth it? If it wasn't for the fact that The Pokémon Company announced that these would be compatible with Sun and Moon, I probably wouldn't have decided on revisiting any one of them – but bear in mind that these games are being presented as-is, warts and all.

That being said, Yellow stands apart from Red and Blue, and I would recommend that as your go-to title if you wanted to choose just one of the three, with Red and Blue being your go-tos for a real catch 'em all challenge. – **REBECCA**



3DS VC ORIGINAL RELEASE: GAME BOY, 1998 (RED & BLUE); 1999 (YELLOW) PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: GAME FREAK



PREVIEWS



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA FOR Wii U

Our wishlists for what we'd like to see in the Wii U's swan song.

OK, I'M DECLARING it: It's time to activate full-on speculation and wishlist mode for the upcoming Legend of Zelda! After over a year of almost total silence on the project from producer Eiji Aonuma and his team, we're now mere months away from its full unveiling at E3 2016. And you've heard plenty of opinions on whether or not the game will remain solely on Wii U or if it will also serve as a launch title for Nintendo's new, mysterious NX platform, so let's call that discussion closed. Now's the time to start thinking about the content of the game itself. What will be included in it? Where will we go? What will we see? Who will we meet? Now's the time to dream about what might be!

Across the next few pages, a dozen different members of the Nintendo Force staff will share their personal wishes with you all – but please allow me to take the floor first! I've been pouring back over the few minutes of footage the company's shared so far to try to get the best sense possible of where Nintendo's heading with this new sequel and try to ground my hopes in some kind of reality. And my first wish?

Crops.

Yes, crops – fields of corn or orchards of apples, or even wild berry bushes you can come across and reach into to snag a handful of minor life-restoring treats. This seems like an odd first request, I know, but it comes

from a blink-and-you'd-miss-it moment in the presentation made by Mr. Aonuma and Mr. Miyamoto at The Game Awards 2014, when they mentioned very briefly that you'd be able to find apples in the wild and eat them. That's exactly the kind of thing I want to hear! This new Zelda has a massive, enormous, way-too-far-to-just-walk world to explore, and if we're going to be venturing across such a vast landscape, I want that landscape to feel real. And lived in. And have a lot of little moments of interaction with the environment that serve no practical purpose other than to make you feel more immersed within it. So, somewhere, I think it'd be fun to come across a farm. Full of crops!

How about small, hidden, not-on-the-map settlements? Some of you may have spotted the lone teepee in the distance in the few seconds of new footage shown in November last year. I'd love to come across tons of little, isolated camps and homes like that – surely there will be a main village or a castle town in this world, but let us stumble across some crazy old hermit living in the woods from time to time too! (Like good old Bagu in Zelda II.)

Another hope? Don't open up fast-travel too quickly. With a world this large, there will surely be some game feature that will let you warp back to places you've previously been, so that you're not turning poor Epona's hooves into mush for lack of any other travel option. But I hope whatever warping solution there is doesn't come along right away. Force us to run or ride for a while at the beginning of the adventure – have us gain an appreciation for the land before letting us zip past it in a flash. I feel like Xenoblade Chronicles X did this beautifully by having the Skells be unlocked only after 25 hours or so, and then their flight capability placed even further away in the story – it made me fall in love with Mira first and foremost, and I want to have the same sense of awe about the all-new land of Hyrule.

Can you tell that I love exploration? All of my wishes revolve around it, and I'm confident I won't be disappointed! Now turn the page to find out what all the other NF staffers are wishing for, then start dreaming up your own wishes as well! – **LUCAS**



Wii U PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EPD
RELEASE: TBA 2016 (WORLDWIDE)



RETELLING THE FIRST TALE

AS THE ZELDA series has grown more focused and linear with each new title, it's not unusual to hear cries for a return to the more open-ended style of the original NES adventure. The upcoming Wii U installment appears to be developing in that direction, true, but is it also possible that it will share even more in common with the 8-bit classic? During the four-minute gameplay demonstration that Mr. Miyamoto and Mr. Aonuma presented at The Game Awards 2014, there was a striking scene in which Link stood at the edge of a cliff overlooking the sun-drenched Hyrule landscape – a scene that eagle-eyed viewers noted bore more than a passing resemblance to the iconic piece of artwork from the NES Zelda's instruction manual seen above. Now, this could be a coincidence, but considering Nintendo's habit of hiding clues within promotional materials, it could just as easily denote a deep and deliberate connection – which would also explain why the game continues to carry a tentative logo that reads simply "The Legend of Zelda" nearly two years since its announcement.

Could this all-new sequel actually be a grand retelling of Link's debut adventure from 30 years ago? I get goosebumps thinking about the kinds of major gameplay beats we could see updated for the HD era – obtaining the first sword from an old man in a cave (or skipping the sword entirely for the bulk of the journey), discovering dungeon entrances in bushes and other unassuming places and, of course, tackling said dungeons in any order without consequence. Mr. Aonuma has said you can approach places in any order, after all! I'm probably setting myself up for disappointment, but hey, if you're gonna dream, you might as well dream big! – **TONY**



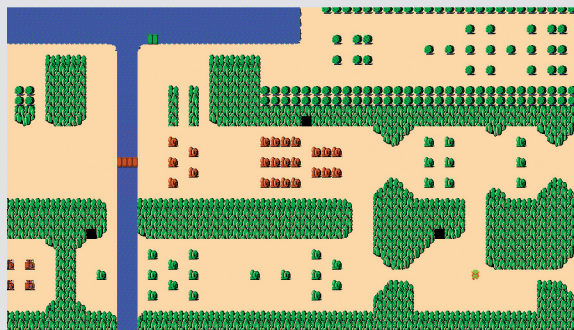
AN ENDGAME DUNGEON

WHILE MANY PEOPLE enjoy the core adventure in each Zelda sequel, I generally love the rewards – and Zelda is one of the most rewarding series in all of gaming. Whether it's that satisfying Heart Piece for beating a boss or a brand-new, shiny item, you're constantly earning things to help you on your quest. But sometimes, conquering something is its own reward – and that feeling is perfectly encapsulated with endgame content. (Or more specifically with Zelda, endgame dungeons.) Whereas a lot of other areas throughout Zelda games task you with mastering an item you've just acquired, locations like the Cave of Ordeals from Twilight Princess force you to be a master of everything in your arsenal. Then there's the mystery element to it – it's an optional place, so a lot of people either won't hear about it or even find it, which sparks some awesome discussions surrounding the game, even if the reward isn't a superweapon or God-tier accessory. Zelda is generally great at pointing you toward your next location without giving it away, but the endgame dungeons feel like truly hidden bonuses to discover. While the Cave of Ordeals is probably the best example of this concept, there have been others, like The Wind Waker's Savage Labyrinth and the "Take 'Em All On!" boss rush minigame in Spirit Tracks. For those of you who plan on picking up Twilight Princess HD, I strongly suggest seeking out the Cave! Personally, I'd love to see this concept return with the upcoming Wii U edition, especially with its focus on open-world exploration. The allure of stumbling across something that hasn't been found yet would foster so many interesting conversations, which is really what The Legend of Zelda is all about: discovery! – **CHRIS**



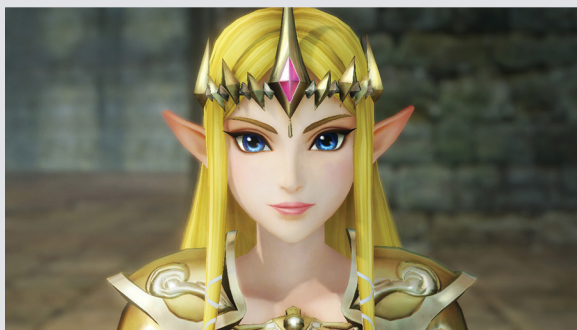
COLORFUL CHARACTERS

DESPITE THE FACT that the series has been around for 30 years, very few NPCs in the Zelda universe have managed to break off and become headliners in their own right, especially compared to similarly storied series like Super Mario (which itself is a spin-off of Donkey Kong). While Wario, Peach, Yoshi and Toad have all parlayed into their own solo adventures, the only supporting actor from the Zelda cast who eventually managed to springboard to leading man status was Tingle (for more about his DS titles, turn to Page 47). Sadly, NOA has done just about everything they can to keep those games out of the spotlight, further proving that if you're a Zelda character, you'd better be named Link, Young Link or Toon Link if you hope to ever see your name up in lights. That may be starting to change, though. Linkle has already developed a large global fandom, despite the fact that her debut in Hyrule Warriors Legends is only available in Japan at the moment. I'm hoping that The Legend of Zelda for Wii U gives us even more new characters with that brand of star power! Like how the power trio in Star Wars: The Force Awakens did for that nearly 40-year-old franchise, a new hero (or set of heroes) could do a lot to help old and new fans alike bond over the Zelda series like never before. As much as I love re-experiencing Link's inevitable hero's journey with each mainline Zelda entry, I'd hate to miss out on the opportunity to see Hyrule from the perspective of a princess, an anti-hero, a mapmaker, a bird person, a store owner or even a bug-eyed fortune teller! Hopefully this new title will be rife with these sorts of colorful characters, ready to star in legends of their own someday. – **JONATHAN**



NON-LINEARITY, PLEASE

ONE OF MY favorite experiences while playing the original Legend of Zelda was exploring the extensive world map: Provided that Link had the right tools and the wits to survive powerful enemies, you could pretty much go anywhere before even touching one of the dungeons, without any subplots or fetchquests to worry about. I learned later on that Zelda's overworld was based on Shigeru Miyamoto's childhood experiences exploring the wilds surrounding his hometown in rural Kyoto Prefecture. He journeyed through the woodlands and found surprises like hidden lakes, and even a cave that he had to work up the courage to explore! What I'm hoping for in Zelda Wii U is a Zelda experience that's just as non-linear as the original. There have been some more modern examples in the series – A Link Between Worlds, for instance, which allowed you to tackle the dungeons in any order thanks to Ravio's rental shop. That didn't feel like a completely new experience for me, though, since it took place in the same Hyrule as A Link to the Past. Seeing Shigeru Miyamoto and Eiji Aonuma demonstrate the map system at The Game Awards 2014 was pretty exciting – and promising. Here was the ability to travel wherever you wished on the map (I hope!) on foot or astride Epona, aided by an improved version of the beacon system from Skyward Sword. I'm looking forward to seeing something interesting off in the distance, and hacking and slashing my way through fields and woods to find it, hoping that some interesting treasure is lurking nearby! (And if it turns out to be a wild Cucco chase, well, at least I got to enjoy the experience and hopefully added some Rupees to my pouch.) – **REBECCA**



MAKE ZELDA THE STAR

THERE'S ONE THING I'd like to see in The Legend of Zelda for Wii U: an additional playable character and story mode. More specifically, the option of using Princess Zelda as the main character! Zelda has come a long way from being nothing more than a royal kidnapping victim in each new sequel, and she deserves a shot at the spotlight. Ever since the release of Ocarina of Time, Princess Zelda has played an integral role in each of the games in which she's been featured, taking on a larger piece of the action each time. From commanding a pirate ship and crew as Tetra in The Wind Waker to inhabiting a ghostly suit of armor in Spirit Tracks to becoming Link's secretive protector Sheik in Ocarina of Time itself, she has proven that she has the chops to take on the starring role herself and really make the game about the legend of Zelda. From a gameplay perspective, considering that Zelda has become somewhat of a master of disguise, she could use this ability to secretly thwart Ganon's plans from behind the scenes as Link completes whatever mission he may be on. Since she's also the princess of Hyrule, you could safely assume that she has the country's vast resources at her disposal. This could add an aspect of strategy/roleplaying to the proceedings. Of course, she could assume the direct role of Hyrule's savior herself, if the story were told from an angle in which Link was defeated and the task of defeating Ganon and his minions was placed of her shoulders. A mix of all these ideas would make for an exciting alternative to the standard Zelda gameplay formula. After 30 years of adventuring across Hyrule as the boy in green, it's time to see Zelda step up and take control of the series that bears her name! – **THOR**



BRING THE LAND TO LIFE

WHAT DO I want to see in this new Zelda game? Engaging puzzles and fun weapons are a given, so my big hope is that Nintendo will put that beautiful art style to good use! I would love to see rolling hills, windswept plains, icy peaks, deadly volcanoes and any other gorgeous landscapes they have to offer. In an age when far too many games rely solely on grey and brown color schemes, Zelda still stands out from the crowd with its brilliant use of color. Wouldn't it be amazing to see some new lands realized in this style? Perhaps Kakariko Village in the autumn, with the rich earth tones of the leaves offset by the blues and greens of the houses – or maybe iridescent purple and indigo sea shells in Zora's Domain, lit with the pink bioluminescence of nearby marine life. The possibilities are endless! The temples themselves also have great artistic potential. As the temples are usually constructed by the different races of Hyrule, it would be amazing if each one reflected their own storied history in the artwork. I for one would love to see how Gorons, Kokiri and other cultures interpret the world around them in different ways, just as visual expression varies across the globe in our world. Contrasting those awe-inspiring sights would be the darker areas of the game. Ganondorf's fortress could be starkly different from everything you saw before, with twisted, asymmetrical architecture and decaying structures amidst its cold, cruel stone walls. Dropping you into such a location would definitely give you a fitting sense of discomfort with the castle's very existence. Really, I just hope I can revisit Hyrule again and again and always find fun new artistic details with every new adventure! – **LINDSEY**



GET RID OF THE GIMMICKS

MY ONE WISH for the next Legend of Zelda game is simple: no gimmicks. Too often, it seems the Zelda development team feels the need to differentiate newer titles from older ones by saddling them with some type of odd gameplay hook, usually to mixed results. As much as I loved Twilight Princess, there's no denying that the Wolf Link portions of the game are easily its weakest moments – and that's to say nothing of Skyward Sword and its insistence on shoe-horning motion controls into every action. Swordplay turned out well and was a natural expression of the Wii Remote's potential, but did we really need to replace boss keys with puzzle cubes that had to be rotated at the most awkward angles? The game's swimming controls were arguably even worse, making the already tedious Tadtone hunt even more frustrating as you struggled to maneuver Link underwater. It's easy to see why Nintendo insists on introducing these kinds of gimmicks in each new Zelda title – in terms of structure, the series really hasn't changed all that much since Ocarina of Time, and recycling the same formula over and over without adding any new ideas to the mix risks making the series stagnant. Truthfully, though, the gimmicks usually just end up being superfluous, and Zelda Wii U already has a hook that sets it apart from every game before it: its massive, sprawling world. I just want to see Nintendo focus its creativity on making this new, open-world version of Hyrule as compelling to explore as possible, without feeling the need to include a secondary gimmick on top of that. After all, the reason A Link Between Worlds was so well received is because of its non-linearity, not because Link could turn into a painting! – **KEVIN K.**



LET GANONDORF POUND MY FACE INTO THE DIRT – IF I'M NOT UP TO SNUFF

A WIDE, OPEN world has been promised for The Legend of Zelda for Wii U, but what I hope for more than anything from this new title is the opportunity to explore it to a degree not seen since 1986. I want to be able to go to virtually any dungeon/labyrinth at any time I want, restricted only by my strength, skill and the occasional need for a little raft than by whether the story says I should be able to go there or not. If I'm good enough, I want to be able to take on the eighth dungeon and get the Magic Key or what have you, even though I've only finished the second dungeon. In short, I want to be able to make this quest my own, rather than a copy of what everyone else is doing in the order they're doing it – shy of taking on Ganon(dorf) right off the bat. Actually, scratch that. *Let me* take him on as soon as I want, and let him pound my face into the dirt like I'm rooting for Hyrulian truffles if I'm not up to snuff. That would make things more interesting, and maybe I could even try, try again as I advance. Make it as hard as a Darknut's frontside, but still possible to overcome if you've got the skill and patience to go for it, even if all you're swinging around is the game's weakest wooden sword. But basically, I'd love a return to a looser idea of what needs to be done and letting me figure it out on my own. Hints are fine, but if I stumble across a dungeon out of the prescribed order? Let me have at it and see if I've got what it takes! – **DAVID**



BRING BACK OLD BADDIES

THIS ZELDA OUTING should be as open-ended as the original, if not more so. It would be great if the sword in this game was an option again, making it possible to complete the quest with the absolute minimum equipment. It would actually be great to have a throwback section of Hyrule where you could visit some of those locales from the first game in 3D! It's been hinted at, and some keen observers have already made comparisons to the original map from the little amount of gameplay we've seen. I'd also like to see some elements return from the oft-forgotten *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link*. Spells could enhance gameplay, make areas accessible or even weaken enemies. Horsehead, Gooma and Barba would be cool to see in HD, along with lesser enemies like the gator-faced Daira, bird knight Fokka, monstrous Doomraddle and the wolf-headed Tinsuit. Error needs a comeback, too! They could bring back the various villages of that NES game as well, or all-new ones. I just don't want to see a single Kakariko hub village, *again*, where all village-type activities happen. My favorite enemies come from *A Link to the Past*, however. I'd love to see Eyegore, Geldman, Pengator, Taros and especially the bomb-throwing brute known as the Hinox. These all seem like great translations to 3D games, but most have not made the jump past 2D. And while I do like nostalgia, I also want to be wowed by something brand new and fresh. *Zelda* games can feel overly formulaic, though recent entries have shaken things up plenty. The new sandbox style is a good start, but it could fall into a series of fetchquests easily. I need a cool new weapon as well! I guess that's a lot of different wishes, but I couldn't pick just one! – **BRETT**



XENOBLADE THIS SUCKER UP

I'M A LIFELONG *Zelda* fan – I distinctly remember renting the original *Legend of Zelda* on the NES and falling in love with its open-ended adventure. And even though the series has had no shortage of great games since, the original is by far the entry that I replay most often. The answer why is simple – no two quests are alike! I can opt to beeline straight for the early dungeons and go in order, saving shop items for later, or I can quickly nab the Blue Candle and Bombs to get a bunch of early Heart Containers and the stronger White Sword even before setting foot inside a single dungeon. I can do most of the dungeons out of order, or even in a complete reverse order (with a couple exceptions). I've even skipped the sword and played through the entire game without it, all the way up to Ganon! And if that's not enough, the game reveals a full, remixed *Second Quest* after you save Princess Zelda the first time! The *Legend of Zelda* trusted players to find things on their own, to explore and discover treasures and frightening monsters and dungeons from the get-go. Not unlike the original *Dragon Quest*, practically the entire world map was accessible from the start of the game if you were willing to brave tougher monsters from the outset. Modern games, *Zelda* included, tend to keep players on more linear paths so that they can see the story unfold the way the developers intended, but it comes at a great cost to freedom and replay value. With Mr. Aonuma citing the original *Zelda* upon the *Wii U* game's reveal, I'm hopeful that they return the series to its exploration-based roots and give us the freedom to discover the world at our own pace. In other words, let's *Xenoblade this sucker up*! – **MATTHEW**



GIVE HYRULE A VOICE

FORGET THE DIVISIVE debate about Link talking. Instead, let's touch upon another aspect of this conversation, one that's much more agreeable: having voice acting for the citizens of Hyrule in *The Legend of Zelda* for *Wii U*. In this day and age, there's no reason why non-playable characters in the next *Zelda* game shouldn't be able to speak. Every other major game employs voice acting, as it breathes life into virtual characters. We get a better sense of their personality and the meaning behind their words. Don't get me wrong; Nintendo writes and localizes *Zelda* characters quite well. But the deafening silence feels odd, especially in story scenes. I want to hear the strained and scary-sounding voice of Ganondorf. I want to hear the urgency *Zelda* has to save her kingdom. And yes, I want to hear the odd ramblings of Tingle. These characters change considerably with each installment of the series (for the most part), so there's no concern getting stuck with one distinct voice if things don't pan out. But maybe Nintendo knocks it out of the park! What if Ganondorf's voice became a cultural cornerstone like Darth Vader's? On top of the added cinematic appeal, bringing voice acting to *The Legend of Zelda* for *Wii U* opens the game up to new groups of people. My 4-year-old nephew would love to explore Hyrule, but his reading comprehension probably isn't ready for a text-heavy *Zelda*. But if the characters are giving hints with actual voices, there's a chance he could figure out his objectives. So let Link hear Hyrule's concerns and Ganondorf's threats spoken, even if he stays silent himself. Here's hoping Nintendo breaks new ground in the *Zelda* series with voices that match the wonderful music! – **EVAN**



MAKE IT UNIVERSALLY LOVED

ONE THING I'VE always loved about the mainline *Zelda* games is how they always show a steady and smart sense of progression. This was especially apparent to me when I played *Ocarina of Time 3D* and *Skyward Sword* within months of each other. The DNA of *Skyward Sword*'s combat and traversal can trace its roots to the Nintendo 64 classic, just like those elements were incrementally experimented on and improved through *Majora's Mask*, *Wind Waker* and *Twilight Princess*. As such, I can't wait to see how the new *Zelda* on *Wii U* takes elements from past *Zelda* games and makes them even better and stronger. That's not so much a wish as it is pure hype and excitement, though – if I had to wish for a few things in *The Legend of Zelda* for *Wii U*, I'd just hope for a world that reminds me of *Termina* or the *Great Sea*, combat that retains the strategy of *Skyward Sword* (even without the motion), a story that hits the heartwarming emotional beats of each previous title and a few memorable weapons and set-pieces that turn the standard *Zelda* gameplay on its ear. Most of all, I want to be wowed – to rekindle the feeling of excitement and joy that I've had with every recent mainline *Zelda*. And maybe make it more universally loved? Like, somehow cause everyone who ever sees or plays it to have an unshakably positive opinion of it for years to come? That way maybe I won't have to deal with a repeat of the last five years, with people telling me *Skyward Sword* is bad – when I adored it and it's probably my favorite *Wii* game. And add Tingle. And bring back the King of Red Lions. And have Kaepora Gaebora show up. And some sages. *Zelda*, too. I guess Ganon can show up, too, but maybe as a gnarly giant HD pig. – **NEAL**



METROID PRIME: FEDERATION FORCE

Nintendo goes into damage control mode.

IT'S RARE TO see Nintendo truly on their heels – because it's rare that an announcement of a new game is met with the kind of extremely negative reaction we saw for *Metroid Prime: Federation Force* at last year's E3. Now, nine months after having been slammed by that wave of vitriol, the company's begun to break the silence that's surrounded the project ever since. Slowly, gingerly, they're trying to reintroduce the title and convince the haters that it's going to be a game worth playing after all.

Kensuke Tanabe, the producer of the *Metroid Prime* series, stepped in front of the camera himself during Nintendo's most recent Direct presentation, and he did his earnest best to make peace with the fans who'd be spurned by the fact that the first new *Metroid* title in years wasn't going to be a traditional adventure starring Samus. He carefully explained the history of the project, tracing its development all the way back to 2009 and casting his vision for why he's wanted to tell this side story in the *Metroid* universe for years.

Mr. Tanabe is certainly genuine, but there may just be no saving this particular sinking ship – the Internet's outrage culture has gripped it and isn't going to let go. Worst of all, it seems like the game itself is going to be great! It looks like it's going to provide pure multiplayer fun, with four Federation troopers all charging into battle together in tricked-out mech suits. Those who actually give it a chance will surely have a blast.

But too few will. *Federation Force* will end up as another unnecessary casualty, cast aside because of a single misstep on Nintendo's part – putting the wrong brand on the box. Like *Code Name: S.T.E.A.M.* couldn't overcome its one issue of lengthy enemy turns, so too will *Federation Force* fail. Too many "fans" out there are playing the "one strike, you're out" game. – LUCAS

3DS PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: NEXT LEVEL GAMES
RELEASE: JUNE 2016 (JAPAN); LATE SPRING 2016 (NORTH AMERICA)



STAR FOX ZERO

The Arwings are still on track for an April arrival.

STAR FOX FANS, fear not! Your prolonged wait is nearly at an end.

Star Fox Zero was originally meant to go on sale last November, but Nintendo wasn't happy with what they were seeing from the game as that release date came closer – so they pushed its debut back a full five months to give themselves more time to polish its graphics and gameplay. But now that polish is in place, and the game's gone into production. We're only weeks away!

If you're glancing at that screenshot up above and thinking that maybe the Arwing has regressed precipitously in polygonal complexity, don't be alarmed – players of 1993's original *Star Fox* on the SNES will recognize that as the very first Arwing 3D model used in the series' debut game! It's been added to *Star Fox Zero* as an optional cosmetic swap for Fox's ride, accessible if you own a Fox amiibo and you tap it to the GamePad as the team prepares to launch out on their next mission. Shigeru Miyamoto has hinted that there will be other amiibo functionality included in the game as well, but they're holding that back as a

secret for the moment. (Which is killing me, because as you all know, I was really hoping for a full *Star Fox* series of amiibo figures.)

Do you happen to have a friend who's also a *Star Fox* fan? Go ahead and recruit them to join you for a session of two-player co-op play, as a new mode's been introduced that splits the controls of a single Arwing between a pair of pals. One of you will serve as the pilot, using a Wii U Pro Controller; the other will be the gunner, directing the GamePad to point at and eliminate enemies. Memories of *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*, anyone?

And finally, Nintendo's latest wave of info on *Zero* reconfirmed that it's going to be structurally similar to *Star Fox 64*, in that a showdown with Andross is the ultimate goal of the main campaign, but you can take several different pathways to end up at that final fight. One feature not seen back in the N64 days is the appearance of huge portals in the sky that seem like they may be able to warp you directly from one stage into another... we'll have to investigate further!

And that's exactly what we'll do, as we'll be playing the final version of *Star Fox Zero* soon to prepare a full review for you all in our next issue! – LUCAS

Wii U PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPERS:
NINTENDO & PLATINUM GAMES
RELEASE: APRIL 22, 2016 (WORLDWIDE)



STAR FOX GUARD

Remember "Project Guard," one of the tech demo-ish games-in-progress that Mr. Miyamoto showed off back at E3 2014? It's back now and officially branded as *Star Fox Guard*, and it's going to be packaged alongside *Star Fox Zero* as a bonus game! (And also sold separately, if you happen to want one and not the other.) *Star Fox Guard* casts good old Slippy Toad as the hero (!), as he's challenged to put his technical wizardry to the test by building laser-equipped surveillance cameras. Those cameras can be placed wherever you wish, but set them up carefully – there's an army of robots on their way, trying to steal Slippy's uncle Gribble's rare metals. You've got to blast 'em!



ナルホド

弁護側は、
被告人の尋問を要求します！

ACE ATTORNEY 6

Now with twice the finger-pointing!

AFTER A BRIEF detour to defend the multiverse along with gaming's best in Project X Zone 2, Phoenix Wright will be returning to court later in 2016. Ace Attorney 6 has been announced for the 3DS by Capcom – and has also been confirmed to be getting an English translation!

Ace Attorney 6 has Phoenix traveling to the fictitious East Asian nation of Kurain, where the spirits of the dead are worshipped and belief in psychic power is commonplace. (If the name sounds familiar to you, it's the same name as the village where Maya Fey comes from – so naturally, Maya will return in this one.) Phoenix learns the hard way how much faith the people of Kurain have in the dead when his young tour guide is arrested for theft and murder: During trials, a spirit medium performs a ritual to summon the final sights and thoughts of the dead in a water mirror, which is accepted as irrefutable evidence of the defendant's guilt. Naturally, Phoenix leaps into action to defend his young client, despite the fact that Kurain has no need for defense attorneys. His adversary, Leifa Padma Kurain, is not only Kurain's princess, but also the medium that performs the court's rituals – and she does not appear to take too kindly to his interference.

Also confirmed to appear are Apollo Justice, who'll be holding down the fort at Wright & Co. Anything Agency back home, as well as junior partner Athena Cykes, who was introduced in Dual Destinies and will be returning along with Widget and the Mood Matrix. Coincidentally, they'll also be facing off against a veteran of the Kurain legal system – international prosecutor Nayuta Sadmadi, who is a devout follower of the Kurain religion that believes convictions bring salvation to victims of crime. It'll be interesting to see how Phoenix's and Apollo's belief in their clients hold up in court against this new pious prosecutor!

So far, no Western date has been announced, but Capcom has confirmed a Japanese release is coming on June 9. – **REBECCA**

3DS PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: CAPCOM RELEASE: JUNE 9, 2016 (JAPAN);
TBA (NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE)



オドロキ

……それを明らかにするためにも、
弁護側は審議の継続を希望します！



DRAGON QUEST MONSTERS: JOKER 3

Come on, take a ride.

IT'S ALMOST TIME to mix more monsters.

RPGs featuring vast casts of recruitable creatures have come along in all shapes and sizes since Pokémon pioneered the practice two decades ago, but the thing that's set the Dragon Quest Monsters series apart has been its focus on monster mixing. You first encounter new characters in battle and "scout" them to get them to join your team as an ally, and then the real action happens – when you take two of those allies and fuse them together to create one new beast who carries on the powers of both of its "parents."

It's an addictive gameplay cycle: recruiting new monsters, leveling them up, fusing them together and then venturing back into the wild to recruit more new monsters, and level *them* up, and so on. Five years ago, I myself got caught up in the rhythm of it all through playing Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2 on the DS – a game many people missed, I think, thanks to the fact that it went on sale in the States months after the new

3DS hardware had already shoved the previous dual-screened system out of the spotlight. Joker 3 might suffer the same fate, depending on how long it takes to be localized. (If it's localized at all!)

But assuming it does arrive on our shores in English, returning monster mixers like myself will be able to enjoy new gameplay features that should take away some of the former game's frustrations – like new battle techniques that you can use to increase your chances of successfully recruiting new monsters. (In Joker 2, many monsters had locked-in low percentage chances of being caught, which grew wearisome over time.)

The flashiest new feature, though, is the fact that Joker 3's new protagonist has the power to ride on top of any of the monsters he befriends. (Seriously, any of them! It looks fairly normal when it's a beast or bird with a natural place to sit, but just wait until you're hopping around on top of a little armored knight who is himself riding on a Slime.) Taking a ride will allow you to travel through the overworld more quickly (naturally), but will also come into play in battle too.

Joker 3 hits in Japan in March, and hopefully elsewhere soon! – **LUCAS**

3DS PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
RELEASE: MARCH 24, 2016 (JAPAN);
TBA (NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE)



©SQUARE ENIX



DRAGON QUEST VII: FRAGMENTS OF THE FORGOTTEN PAST

A time travel tale.

THE SUBTITLE SQUARE ENIX

assigned to this adventure fits my experience with it perfectly, as my memory holds only bits and pieces of knowledge about it from the time it first debuted on Sony's first PlayStation nearly 15 years ago. As a Nintendo loyalist, it slipped under my radar entirely – I, and likely many of you too, was too busy awaiting the arrival of the new GameCube hardware in November 2001 to pay any attention to Dragon Warrior VII, which went on sale on October 31 that same year. I missed it altogether.

Luckily, fate's giving me and any other Nintendo-only gamers in the same predicament a second chance to experience the forgotten adventure of Fragments of the Forgotten Past, as a fully reworked 3DS remake is heading our way in English later this year. That "in English" part is critical, too, as this remake has been on sale in Japan since way back in February 2013, and most Western fans had given up hope of a translated release long ago. But their patience is

finally being rewarded!

As with many JRPGs, the overall goal in Dragon Quest VII is to save the world – but, uniquely, you must first bring your world back into existence to be able to save it. You start the adventure as a young lad living on a small island, which, to most everyone's knowledge, is the only landmass on the planet – but then your father brings home a scrap of a map that hints at other continents that existed at some point in the past, but somehow sank beneath the waves.

What's a good JRPG hero to do? Travel back in time, of course! You'll make your way back into the titular Forgotten Past and set about the task of recruiting fellow heroes to avert the cataclysms that you know are looming for these continents – and when you succeed in changing history, you'll find that the landmass you saved is restored to the timeline in your own "present day."

I'm thrilled by time travel tales in any shape or form, so I'm especially thrilled that we'll soon be getting one in the form of a Dragon Quest series sequel that my poor past self somehow missed out on playing. Oh well! No time like the present to correct that past mistake! – **LUCAS**

3DS PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER:
SQUARE ENIX RELEASE: TBA 2016
(NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE)



ZERO TIME DILEMMA

Zero Escape's third volume approaches.

THE FIRST CHAPTER in the Zero Escape saga – Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors – is hands down my favorite game on Nintendo DS. The 3DS sequel – Virtue's Last Reward – didn't quite hit the same highs for me, but it's nonetheless an engrossing adventure worthy of commendation.

Yes, I am a total Zero Escape cheerleader, so it goes without saying that the third and final chapter – Zero Time Dilemma – is among my most anticipated games of this generation.

Never had my expectations been so completely blown away than when I first picked up Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors (or simply 999). All promotional materials pegged it as a simple escape-the-room point-and-click adventure wrapped in a basic yet morbid narrative shell. To my surprise, it was instead my introduction to the world of visual novels, albeit one which employed a number of interactive puzzles to cleverly tie the tale together.

And what a tale it was! You and eight others are trapped on an old cruise ship and forced to put your lives on the line. As the hours pass, you learn that your ordeal is more than just your captor's idea of sick entertainment, and that even the most dire endings may not be endings at all.

If that synopsis is too cryptic, it's because both 999 and Virtue's Last Reward are bursting with so many legitimately shocking twists that to go into any detail whatsoever would be to risk spoiling the experience for first-time players. Likewise, I hesitate to discuss Zero Time Dilemma directly. (Allow director/lead writer Kotaro Uchikoshi to share the juicy details himself when he presents the game at GDC 2016 in mid-March, just after this issue has gone to print!)

I will express relief that this game exists at all – though the first two Zero Escapes found success here in the West, poor Japanese sales resulted in development of the third being placed on hold for a while. It was only because of the overwhelming fan outpouring that work was allowed to continue! In acknowledgment of this support, both the Japanese and localized versions are being produced simultaneously! – **TONY**

3DS PUBLISHER: AKSYS GAMES DEVELOPER: SPIKE CHUNSOFT
RELEASE: Q2/Q3 2016 (NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE)



POKKÉN TOURNAMENT

The roster is set. Let the battles begin!

WE'RE SO CLOSE to the release of Pokkén Tournament, I can feel it. Ever since I played it for myself in Japan, I've wanted to take some time in the lab with some of my personal favorite monsters, and I have my pre-order for both the game and the official controller ready. The launch roster of 16 has been revealed – though more characters are expected to be added eventually. Curiously, Bandai Namco has noted that there's no planned DLC for the Wii U edition, so unless that tune changes, upcoming fighters may be exclusive to the arcade version – barring an "EX" release or something of that sort.

Thankfully, we now have a better look at what we're getting in the console version based on some recent announcements. In addition to a full-on campaign titled the "Ferrum League" that has four ranks in tow, the Wii U release will ship with a training mode, as well as a gametype to specifically test out combos. There's also a feature called "My Town," in which players can customize their own trainer. Nintendo has also noted that "all" amiibo will

work with Pokkén Tournament, as they'll each unlock some sort of in-game item rewards.

The recent unveiling of Braixen, Chandelure and Garchomp should have everyone sufficiently excited to try out a wide variety of playstyles as well! After all, the developers have specifically noted many times that this is a perfect game to pick up if you don't normally excel in the genre. Rather than relying on intricate combos that players have to memorize to succeed, the system is more in line with Super Smash Bros., where specific directional button combinations queue up the appropriate move. So if you want to go for a low or high hit, you just aim in that direction and spring a normal or special attack. That's it! A lot of fighters have a good kit available to them – including plenty of projectile attacks – so expect lots of both ranged and melee situations in any given match. Me? I'm psyched to try out Gengar some more.

To prepare for Pokkén, Nintendo is prepping their own official festivities in the tournament arena, as part of the

Pokémon World Championships this year. GameStop recently hosted a qualifying tournament at select locations, and the finalists will be flown to New York, then Ohio, then the final World Championship. Pro fighting game coaches will be supplied for those who make it through the GameStop round. Considering the game will be at EVO this year, Nintendo is really going all-in on this game!

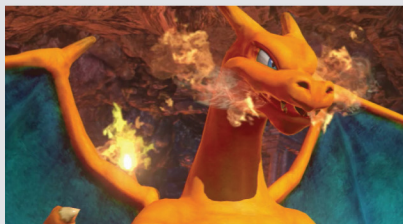
There are some concerns, however, like the inability to use a preferred controller – for instance, what if both players want to use the special Pokkén pad? The game doesn't support two at a time. LAN play is a go however, so at least the perspective issue is addressed. It'll be interesting to see how Nintendo and Bandai Namco support this platform down the road, but for now, it's looking good! Be prepared for Pokkén to hit retail shelves and the eShop on March 18. Stay tuned for our full review in Issue #21! – **CHRIS**

Wii U PUBLISHER: THE POKÉMON COMPANY
DEVELOPER: BANDAI NAMCO
RELEASE: MARCH 18, 2016 (WORLDWIDE)



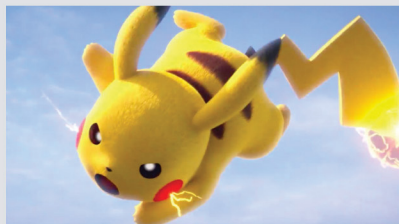
CHOOSE YOUR POKÉMON!

When Pokkén Tournament was first teased, it was with a face-off between Blaziken and Lucario – two Fighting-type Pokémon. When it was officially revealed as a game in development later on, Machop was unveiled – again, another Fighting-type. So there was a while there when we thought this tourney might be Fighting-types only. Boy, were we wrong! The final roster is wildly diverse, with Pokémon of all types and shapes and sizes. Take a look at the options below, then decide who you'll choose!



CHARIZARD

The series' most famous firebreathing dragon (who isn't a Dragon-type), Charizard is pulling double duty after his playable stint in Super Smash Bros.



PIKACHU

You can't break into a new genre with the Pokémon brand without the series' electric ambassador in attendance, so Pikachu's here with shocks and awe.



MACHOP

The multi-armed muscle 'mon lets his four fists do the talking for him, flying into opponents in furious barrages that are nothing but a blur.



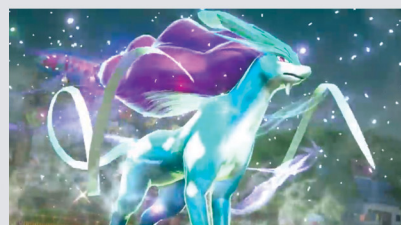
GENGAR

That's Mega Gengar there, and if you're unlucky enough to be facing off against this gregarious ghost when you see that face . . . well, good luck!



MEWTWO

Mewtwo is one of the main draws of Pokkén thanks to his new Shadow Mewtwo form, but he'll also be playable with his original look as well.



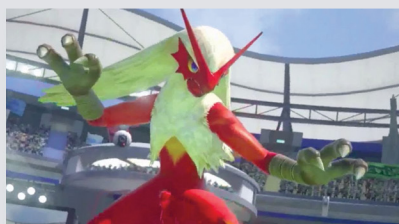
SUICUNE

You don't see a lot of quadrupedal battlers in the fighting game genre, but Suicune's not going to let an extra pair of legs slow her down.



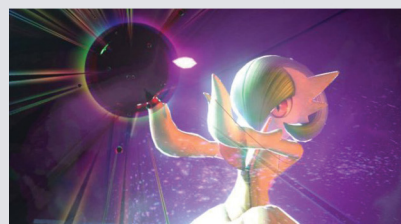
SCEPTILE

Representing the Grass-type is Hoenn's fully evolved Treecko (totally the best Grass starter of all time). Be prepared to be sliced apart by Leaf Blade!



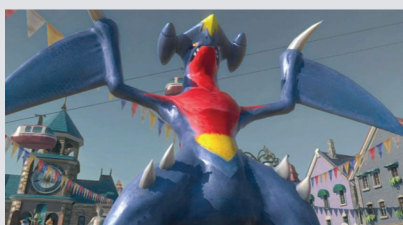
BLAZIKEN

The Pokémon Company made us wait a while for the official confirmation of everyone's favorite Fire/Fighting-type chicken warrior, but he's in!



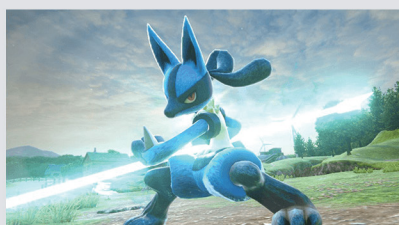
GARDEVOIR

There's a whole faction of fans out there who'll likely be buying this game thanks to Gardevoir's inclusion alone. You know who you are!



GARCHOMP

The first representative of the Sinnoh Region, Garchomp the land shark is fighting for the glory of Champion Cynthia! (Or your glory, I suppose.)



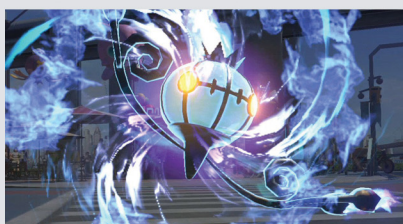
LUCARIO

The most famous Sinnoh monster, though, has to be Lucario. His own time spent in the Smash series has prepared him to face any kind of opponent!



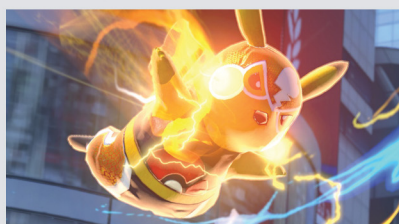
WEAVILE

Don't be deceived by this wily weasel – she'll smile all the way up to hugging distance, then slash you to pieces with her seriously sharp claws.



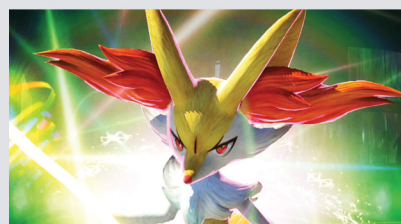
CHANDELURE

The only playable fighter from the Unova Region (unless they do add more as DLC), Chandelure is a total goof of a ghost with an off-the-wall playstyle!



PIKACHU LIBRE

Two different Pikachus? We shouldn't be surprised – but this masked version of the mascot has an entirely different moveset than the vanilla 'chu.



BRAIXEN

Finally, someone thought having two Fire starters wouldn't be enough, so here's a third. Braixen may just burn me alive for doubting her skills, though!



LEGO STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

The brick-built brand goes back to its foundation.

AFTER 32 YEARS of waiting, the Star Wars film saga continued beyond Return of the Jedi by advancing time 30 years into the future for The Force Awakens. Now, for the film's second video game adaptation, TT Games is traveling 11 years into the past.

LEGO Star Wars was the game that first kicked off LEGO's pop culture-adapting video games back in 2005, and I personally thought we'd never see it come back again – after all, Star Wars is a Disney brand now, and The Force Awakens was already made playable on Wii U and other consoles through Disney Infinity 3.0's Play Set

called, well, "The Force Awakens." But shockingly enough, the House of Mouse is allowing for a LEGO game version of the film to co-exist with that established set. How? Why?

Who cares! We're getting a great, hilarious-looking new game out of whatever deal was made, so I won't second-guess things any further.

The developers at TT Games have come a long way since that first, now comparatively rudimentary Star Wars adventure back in '05, and even more new innovations will be included here over and above the decade's worth of general improvements they've made to the basic block-building gameplay formula. One new addition is being referred to as "Multi-Builds." Every

LEGO game has featured moments in which our plastic heroes have come across piles of unbuilt bricks and used them to construct needed objects like bridges or staircases on the spot – but with Multi-Builds, those moments will no longer be one-and-done events. You'll be able to bust apart bridges or staircases that you've just constructed and use their same component bricks over again, to build another new path.

Combat's getting refined too, with the addition of Blaster Battles – no longer will laser rifle firefights be bland, wild sprays of shots into groups of hapless foes just standing around in the open. Rather, ducking behind cover will now be integrated to make the action more dynamic.

Perhaps the most exciting part of LEGO Star Wars: The Force Awakens will be its story, though, as the developers have been granted access by Lucasfilm to break out beyond the bounds of adapting the film itself and include playable missions that take place in other parts of the Star Wars timeline. These will fill in some of the gaps between the events of Return of the Jedi and where the new film began on Jakku, such as explaining how Han and Chewie were first able to capture the imposing Rathtar beasts that broke free and gave our heroes a heart attack in The Force Awakens.

There have been something like 30 different LEGO-branded games since 2005, but Star Wars is the series that started it all. I, for one, am excited to go back to that beginning! – **LUCAS**

Wii U PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. I.E.
DEVELOPER: TT GAMES RELEASE:
JUNE 28, 2016 (NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE)





KIRBY: PLANET ROBOTOT

Paging Dr. Kirby! You're needed immediately!

THE PINK PUFFBALL is back again, and this time he's got a prescription for pain! The all-new Doctor power gives Kirby an instant PhD (and a fine pair of glasses) and allows him to assault his enemies by lobbing oversized pills straight at their faces. Take two of them, but don't bother calling in the morning!

Doctor is just one of the new Copy Abilities Kirby can acquire in the all-new Kirby: Planet Robobot, the new 3DS-bound follow-up to 2014's Kirby: Triple Deluxe. This time around our hovering hero is fighting back against the forces of the Haltmann Works Company, an invading force of mechanized beings who have taken over Dream Land and transformed its lands and creatures into techno-organic cyborgs! Every common Kirby series foe you've seen time and time again has had its body twisted and transformed into something that looks like the Terminator. Just look at what they've done to poor Whispy Woods up there!

Luckily, Kirby can get the better of these gearheads by turning their own tech against them. Like Mega Man X suiting up in Ride Armor back in the '90s, so too can Kirby now steal armored mech suits from his foes and use them to blast through other enemies and obstacles. The Robobot Armor, as it's called, can even copy Kirby's own ability to copy – it can transform its shape and function based on enemies it scans.

That's just the beginning of all the new features packed into this great-looking new sequel, and best of all, it's coming in just a few months! We'll have much more on its new modes and other new Copy Abilities in our next issue. Get excited! – LUCAS

3DS PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: HAL LABORATORY
RELEASE: JUNE 10, 2016 (NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE)



PAPER MARIO: COLOR SPLASH

Out with the stickers, in with a bucket of paint.

PAPER MARIO FANS, your prayers have . . . *probably* not been answered.

The good news is that an all-new installment in the Paper Mario series has been confirmed to be coming to Wii U later this year. The bad news is that, from what we've seen so far, it seems like a continuation of the gameplay style of 2012's Paper Mario: Sticker Star, which a lot of fans of the franchise didn't really care for. Most longtime followers of the paper-thin plumber's adventures were hoping that his next quest would mark a return to the RPG stylings of the first Paper Mario on the N64, or Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door from the Game Boy Advance. But that's not looking likely.

The reason being that the battle system seen in action for Color Splash looks just like a high-definition version of

Sticker Star's. In that game, you gathered stickers everywhere you could, and each one of them triggered a different kind of attack in battle. Here, the mechanic's been cosmetically changed to use cards instead, but seems otherwise unaltered.

Likewise, no partner characters seem to be joining Mario in his fights. We've caught a glimpse of a floating bucket trailing after our hero, but that's likely just this game's tag-along helper character – like Sticker Star's Kersti.

Gameplay reservations aside, one undeniably positive part of this package is its presentation – because wow, does this world look good! The setting this time around is Prism Island, a vacation destination that's being drained of all its color. Mario's mission is to bring back the island's vibrance with the help of a new paint-sloshing hammer!

The first impression's mixed here, but we'll see how it all plays out. – LUCAS

Wii U PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPERS: NINTENDO & INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
RELEASE: TBA 2016 (WORLDWIDE)





FEATURES

30 YEARS OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®

A CHRONOLOGICAL RETROSPECTIVE

A long, long time ago, the World was in an age of Chaos.

In the midst of this chaos, in a little kingdom in the land of Hyrule, a legend was being handed down from generation to generation. The legend of the Triforce: golden triangles possessing mystical powers. One day, an evil army attacked this peaceful little kingdom and stole the Triforce of Power. This army was led by Ganon, the powerful Prince of Darkness who sought to plunge the World into fear and darkness under his rule. Fearing his wicked rule, Zelda, the princess of the kingdom, split up the Triforce of Wisdom into eight fragments and hid them throughout the realm to save the last remaining Triforce from the clutches of the evil Ganon. At the same time, she commanded her most trustworthy nursemaid, Impa, to secretly escape into the land and go find a man with enough courage to destroy the evil Ganon. Upon hearing this, Ganon grew angry, imprisoned the princess and sent out a party in search of Impa.

Braving forests and mountains, Impa fled for her life from her pursuers. As she reached the very limit of her energy, she found herself surrounded by Ganon's evil henchmen. Cornered! What could she do? ... But wait! All was not lost. A young lad appeared. He skillfully drove off Ganon's henchmen and saved Impa from a fate worse than death.

His name was Link. During his travels he had come across Impa and Ganon's henchmen. Impa told Link the whole story of Princess Zelda and the evil Ganon. Burning with a sense of justice, Link resolved to save Zelda – but Ganon was a powerful opponent. He held the Triforce of Power. And so, in order to fight off Ganon, Link had to bring the scattered eight fragments of the Triforce of Wisdom together to rebuild the mystical triangle. If he couldn't do this, there would be no chance Link could fight his way into Death Mountain where Ganon lived.

Can Link really destroy Ganon and save Princess Zelda? Well, yes. He did 30 years ago. And several times since then!

1986

HYRULE'S FANTASY BEGINS

OK, SO YOU probably picked up on the origins of those introductory paragraphs just now – they're taken straight from the instruction manual for the first Legend of Zelda. (Well, all except the last bit, of course.) It's been 30 years now since Nintendo fans first read those words; since they first heeded the call to action to set off into the fantasy world of Hyrule and save Princess Zelda. And even today, they still have the power to get you excited for an adventure, don't they? Those words set the stage for what has gone on to become one of gaming's most important franchises, impacting millions of fans over the course of the past three decades. So now, we're honoring the series' full run, one year at a time, to present the fullest picture possible of just how Link's battles against the evil Ganon have grown and evolved since that first day.

That first day, specifically, was February 21, 1986. That's the day when "Zelda no Densetsu" first went on sale in Japan, accompanied by the arrival of the Famicom Disk System – because The Legend of Zelda wasn't a cartridge game in its home country, but rather the title Nintendo used to launch their new disk format for games. Everyone at Nintendo clearly knew they had a winner on their hands to entrust a brand-new, unproven series with carrying a major hardware launch!

Their faith was well placed, of course – The Legend of Zelda was a revelation in adventure game design. With action displayed from a top-down, birds-eye-view perspective, you took control of a young boy in green clothes and began to explore a massive world built from a vast grid of interconnected screens. Each screen held some kind of secret – perhaps a bush could be burned to reveal a hidden staircase below, or a wall could be blasted with a bomb to open the mouth of a cave. Freedom to find what was hidden in nearly every corner of the overworld was available right from the start – you didn't even have to stop into the first screen's cave to pick up the sword if you didn't want to!

The adventures in the overworld were just half the story, though – The Legend of Zelda also challenged aspiring heroes to descend into the depths of underworld dungeons, each of them packed with fierce foes, traps and puzzles. Thankfully, there were also treasures to be discovered! While our hero Link started his quest with nothing but a tiny shield, he could find an entire arsenal of weapons and items over time, ultimately wielding a bow and arrow, a magic wand, a boomerang and . . . a hunk of meat.

Yes, The Legend of Zelda was a high fantasy adventure, but it also knew how to joke around and have fun from the very beginning. The game was a huge success for the nation of gamers who'd enjoyed Famicom titles since 1983, and Nintendo quickly made plans for it to go global! – **LUCAS**



1987

THE GOLDEN CARTRIDGE

HAD NINTENDO OF America also launched The Legend of Zelda on February 21, 1986, it likely wouldn't have found much of an audience – because the Nintendo Entertainment System itself hadn't even rolled out across the United States by that point! Fans here in North America were just beginning their NES journeys and being introduced to the likes of Excitebike, Duck Hunt and Super Mario Bros. So NOA took their time with reading Zelda, pouring in tons of extra time and effort to ensure that when it did launch in English, it would be a major, memorable event.

The day finally came on August 22, 1987. Beginning that day, gamers who walked into retail stores' still-small Nintendo sections would have had their eyes captured by a gleam of gold! Nintendo of America had gone all-out for The Legend of Zelda's cartridge, covering the common grey that was all gamers had known to that point with an instantly visually arresting paintjob of shining gold. Even better, they cut a small "window" into the front of its box so that you could peek inside and see that the cartridge resting within was truly something special! The color gold has been associated with the Zelda series' marketing ever since. (Oh, and that reminds me of one more wish for The Legend of Zelda for Wii U: Make its disc golden!)

European fans also got the golden cartridge when the game made its debut there a few months later, in November . . . but wait. Why was it on a cartridge at all? In Japan it had been a Disk System game!

Well, Nintendo held the Disk System back from international release – and probably wisely, because just think of how confused consumers would have been if they'd just picked up the NES and had to immediately buy a separate attachment for it to play disk-based games. The timing just didn't make sense.

So The Legend of Zelda became a cartridge game like all the rest in the West, but upgraded with a built-in battery save feature (pioneering that practice for Nintendo). The adventure also had to be modified from its Japanese source material because the Western NES controllers didn't have a microphone built-in like the Famicom's Controller II did, which altered a trick the game had featured in Japan. You know those big-eared, rabbit-looking enemies called Poles Voices? In the Japanese version of the game, you could blow into the controller's microphone to zap them with the power of your booming sound waves. But outside Japan, you couldn't trigger that effect any more (so their weakness was changed to arrows).

That's just one of the changes that happened in the localization process that brought The Legend of Zelda out of Japan for the first time, and if it strikes you as interesting, don't miss our interview with Clyde Mandelin coming up on Page 59! He literally wrote the book on the subject.

Nintendo of America had been nervous about releasing The Legend of Zelda in the States – they worried that it might be too complex for the players here. Perhaps that was the real reason they went all-out with the golden coat of paint and the packed-in maps, tips and tricks. But they had nothing to worry about! The game was an instant hit, and it became the second million-seller on the NES, right after Super Mario Bros. – **LUCAS**



1988

A SIDESCROLLING SEQUEL

1988 WAS THE year of "two" for The Legend of Zelda. In the very first issue of Nintendo Force predecessor Nintendo Power magazine, one of the main features was a nine-page review/guide to the famed Second Quest of the original title. Filled with maps, tips and some quite rare artwork, the feature culminated in the magazine's first-ever fold-out map of the revised world of Hyrule, complete with a buyer's guide to all the shops in the land, as well as where all of the Overworld's secrets were hidden.

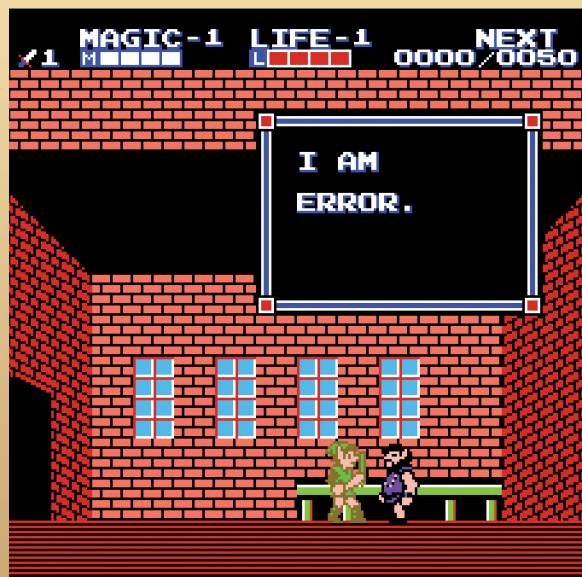
The other big "two" for Zelda was none other than Zelda II: The Adventure of Link, which also came on a golden Game Pak, just like its predecessor. However, fans seeking more thrills in the land of Hyrule were soon frustrated – not by the game's formidable challenges, but by the challenge of actually finding a copy of the game! Attributed to a shortage of microchips, the first sequel in the series was released in very short supply around the November/December timeframe. As with the also enormously popular Super Mario Bros. 2, this would provide no shortage of frustration to parents of that pre-Internet age, as many drove from store to store and state to state in order to put that one little bit of Hyrulian magic underneath the Christmas tree for their kids.

Also like Super Mario Bros. 2, Zelda II diverged from the gameplay of its immediate predecessor – in this adventure, Link fought his foes from a sidescrolling perspective. That made combat more of a challenge than before, and jumping/platforming also became part of the experience.

Also new and different in Zelda II? The addition of magic spells, which let Link augment his defensive strength or jumping height, or even transform into a fairy! An RPG-like experience point system was introduced as well, allowing Link to level up his magical ability, his life meter's resistance to damage or the damage he himself inflicted with his sword.

Add on a vastly expanded overworld full of towns populated with odd NPCs like the infamous Error, and you had a sequel that was so far and away removed from the design of the first Zelda that it could really have been marketed as a different game entirely, had the hero not been Link.

Because of those wild differences – and because the series' next sequel reverted back to the top-down style and ignored many of this one's innovations – Zelda II: The Adventure of Link has sadly gone from being an extremely popular hit to an oft-derided "black sheep" of the franchise. It was nonetheless the fifth-best-selling game for Nintendo's Entertainment System with 4.38 million copies sold worldwide, though! What's more, its impact can still be felt in several Zelda games to this day, while influencing others! – **DAVID**



1989

WELL, EXCUUUUUUSE ME!

WHILE 1988 WAS a big year for all things Zelda, 1989 would prove to be bigger still. While copies of Zelda II: The Adventure of Link were in short supply going into 1988's holiday season, things began to level out as the new year progressed – making 1989 its real release year in the States, for all practical purposes. Zelda II's wider rollout was accompanied by a cover story for the first Nintendo Power magazine of the year, featuring not only a whopping 17-page guide to the new title, but also another fold-out poster depicting a map of the greater land of Hyrule. (Which was followed by seven *more* pages in the following issue.)

What's more, the same issue featured the conclusion of the Captain Nintendo short story, which saw Link join up with the hero of Power Players everywhere as they joined forces to free Princess Zelda from the clutches of Ganon and . . . Mother Brain? The partnership between the two heroes was short-lived, but it planted seeds for the next iteration of the captain that would bear fruit the next year.

Though Zelda II reaching its full audience was a huge milestone for the franchise earlier in the year, the biggest event for Zelda fans in 1989 took place on September 8 – four days after The Super Mario Bros. Super Show! hit the airwaves in syndication. On that Friday, following a week's worth of teasers, the world got to see the first episode of DiC's The Legend of Zelda cartoon!

"The Ringer" kicked off a 13-episode, once-a-week run of episodes that seemingly took place between Link's two NES adventures. For many viewers, the Zelda cartoon was the highlight of Nintendo's foray into the world of animated entertainment, even above the hijinks of the eponymous brothers. But others found the episodic nature and writing – including the repeated use of Link's catchphrase, "Well, excuuuuuuse me, Princess!" – to be a bit more grating on the nerves.

The cartoon was noteworthy for making Princess Zelda a much more active participant in the action, including a redesign of her attire to something more action-ready and arming her with a magical bow and arrow and boomerang. Certainly, she was still kidnapped every now and then, as per the games, but the cartoon balanced it out by taking Link out of action in one way or another on occasion as well. In addition, it provided Link with a steed nearly a decade before we first met Epona, as well as a fairy sidekick named Spryte – nearly a decade before Navi demanded that players "Listen!" – and it maintained consistency with its source material by using items, enemies and sound effects pulled straight out of the games. The sound of Link's sword beam is still nostalgically satisfying!

Some noteworthy names helped make the most of what the show was in its limited format. Among them was story editor Bob Forward, who would go on to become well known among Transformers fans as a writer and co-editor of Beast Wars, while the game-inspired soundtrack was created by the duo of Shuki Levy and Haim Saban, who provided music for many kids' shows in the '80s and early '90s, with the latter going on to produce Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. – **DAVID**



1990

LINK'S FIRST CROSSOVER

WHILE NO NEW Zelda games were released in 1990, Nintendo of America opted to continue expanding the adventures of Link, Zelda and Ganon in other mediums.

First, there was *The Legend of Zelda* from Valiant Comics, released under its Nintendo Comics System imprint that featured other comics based on *Super Mario Bros.*, *Captain N: The Game Master*, *Game Boy*, *Metroid* and *Punch-Out!!*. In addition to occasionally being featured in various compilations, each monthly comic book included two 10-page *Legend of Zelda* stories, alongside some humorous bonus shorts and informative maps of Hyrule and North Castle.

The five-issue comic run felt like something of a pastiche of the video games and the cartoon series – mixing elements such as Link's game design with Zelda's cartoon design – though it largely favored the games foremost. Several of the 10-page stories were standalone tales, though there were also tales that would span an entire issue, building upon the lore of the young (in real-world time) land of Hyrule in interesting ways.

In one issue, readers were treated to tales ranging from Link confronting his old friend-turned-traitor, Bagu, while another saw Link defeat Ganon and claim the Triforce of Power, only to discover that he had not only become the leader of Ganon's minions, but was gradually transforming into a pig-like beast as the power corrupted him. Light was also shed on Link's origins, introducing his parents and the kingdom from which he originally hailed, Calatia.

In the Fall of that year, however, Link and Zelda returned to television screens as guests on the second season of DiC's *Captain N: The Game Master*. Seemingly picking up after the 13 episodes of its run on *The Super Mario Bros. Super Show!* (where it would continue to be featured as part of the rebranded *Club Mario* in syndication), the world of Hyrule was shown on *Captain N* to be a part of the realm of Videoland, and it hewed more closely to *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* than its predecessor.

Featuring older, more mature, and redesigned versions of Link and Zelda, they call for the help of *Captain N* as whispers are going around that Ganon's minions seek to revive their leader with the episode's titular "Potion of Power" (as sprinkling Link's blood on Ganon's ashes was apparently deemed inappropriate for a Saturday morning cartoon). As it turns out, Mother Brain and her minions also have a keen interest in reviving the Pig of Darkness, hoping to use his powerful dark magic for their own gain. They succeed in the task – while getting a much uglier version of the villain in the process – but are soon thwarted by our heroes.

Though Len Carlson's Ganon would never be heard from again, Link and Zelda put in three more appearances alongside the *N Team* in the 14-episode season as they chased down the Power Pad/Zapper-stealing villain of *Puss 'n Boots*, helped build a "Trojan Dragon" to infiltrate the Dragon Lord's lair in *Dragon Warrior* and stopped Eggplant Wizard and King Hippo from stealing the Triforces of Power and Courage! – **DAVID**



1991

THE THIRD CHAPTER

I'VE READ A lot of lists ranking the SNES game library over the years, and most have had *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* ranking in somewhere in the Top 3. While the rest of the world wouldn't see its release until 1992, Japan got the third installment in the series in 1991. It took the original game and expanded upon every element, adding to the legend and offering two full worlds to explore.

In fact, most of the lore that the series still uses stems from this game. It presented the idea of two opposing forces that almost every game afterward uses: Light vs. dark, young vs. old, land vs. sea, etc. It was also one of the most epic quests gaming had seen up to that point, taking an average of 17 hours to complete. The abundance of secrets in the game could easily push the title past the 20-hour mark, and added to the feeling that Hyrule was a bustling place full of friends and foes.

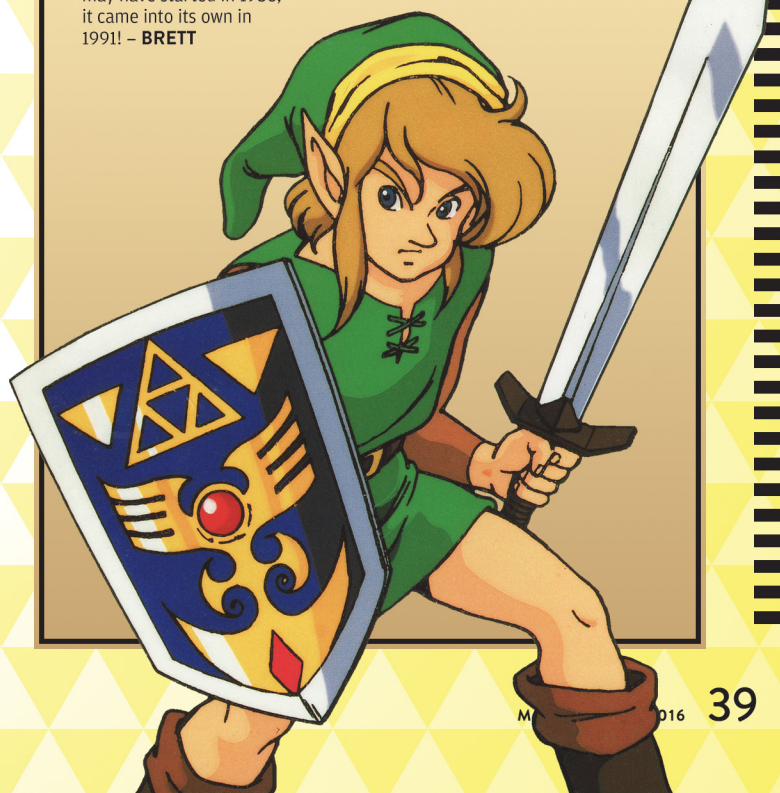
Link's arsenal also grew, with over 35 items to collect – several with upgrade potential. Many – like the bottles, Magic Hammer, Hookshot, Bug-Catching Net and Ocarina – have become series staples, reappearing over and over again in later games. Pieces of Heart were also created, adding to the collection.

Ganondorf Dragmire was introduced – though off-screen – as Nintendo fleshed out the backstory of the villain who sought the Triforce's power and ultimately became the pig beast Ganon (the version of the villain seen on-screen).

Maybe the most important of all of the newly introduced elements was the Master Sword, though, as was the formula of progressing through the quest by having to prove yourself worthy to wield it by gathering three objects – in this case pendants – representing the recurring themes of wisdom, courage and power.

Most of the enemies from the first game made a shinier appearance, but there were also new threats for Link to face. All of the soldiers in Hyrule Castle were under a spell, and there were also all-new enemies that only appeared in the Dark World – like Hinoxes, Snap Dragons and Ropas. That's right, just when you'd traversed most of the Light World, the game shoved you into the unforgiving Dark World (where you needed a Moon Pearl just to prevent Link from shapeshifting into a helpless bunny). The boss battles also tested your mettle and your proficiency with tools – trick Blind the Thief into revealing his true form, grab the Argri from Arrghs with the Hookshot and use the Hammer on the Helmasaur King!

A *Link to the Past* was more than groundbreaking – it truly was, and is to this day, a legend. While the series may have started in 1986, it came into its own in 1991! – **BRETT**



1992

A YEARLONG COMIC QUEST

IN THE YEAR 1992, *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* was being experienced worldwide – and everyone was craving more. While waiting for the arrival of the series' next sequel, fans turned to books and comics provided by Nintendo Adventure Books and Nintendo Power.

The Nintendo Adventure Books generally featured Mario, but there were two adventures that took place in Hyrule: *The Shadow Prince* and *The Crystal Trap*. Featuring art very similar to the previous years' Valiant Comics that in turn stemmed from DIC's cartoon, the two books provided Choose Your Own Adventure-style stories with a Nintendo overlay.

The Shadow Prince has Link and Zelda being aided by Prince Charles, who hails from another land. He helps at first, but Link eventually reveals that he has a nefarious purpose, and the whole book sort of mirrors the episode "The White Knight" from the cartoon series.

The Crystal Trap has readers stepping into the role of Zelda, who's trying to save Link from a trap that Ganon has set up by capturing both of the Triforces. (These books have the same early concept of series lore as the cartoon, in that they only have two pieces of the Triforce.)

The comic appeared over the course of 12 issues of Nintendo Power from January to December, taking NP subscribers on a yearlong journey through the events of *A Link to the Past*. The comic didn't follow the game exactly, instead appearing in an alternative universe of sorts. There were new characters in familiar, yet changed, locales, and new items like the Comfort – which Link used to communicate with his Light World allies while he explored the dangerous Dark World.

Zelda and Link had a stronger relationship and more interaction, helping to show Link's transformation from boy to hero. Link still rescued Zelda from imprisonment in Hyrule Castle and Agahnim, only to have her stolen away again. He went after the pendants in order to wield the Master Sword, then ended up in the Dark World – but the similarities end there. While trying to find and rescue maidens, he learned his parents were Knights of Hyrule, which is a rare mention of Link's mother and father. He also saved Ephemerelda the fairy who guided and healed him, and Roam, another knight, who helped him defeat Ganon (after he and Link came to blows first). Zelda also had a prominent role toward the end, and the story even had a great epilogue. The comic has been released twice as a standalone graphic novel and is definitely worth picking up!

– BRETT

1993

THE LEGEND ON THE GO

ONE OF THE themes that runs throughout the *Legend of Zelda* series is that of duality – of a world of light and a world of darkness. To me, no year in the history of the series exemplifies that better than 1993.

With the huge success of *A Link to the Past* still fresh in everybody's minds, the revelation that the fourth *Zelda* game was to be for the Game Boy came as something of a shock – fans were afraid that Link's Awakening would have to return to the simple style of the first game, but with a palette of four shades of green. (At least Link's tunic would be the right color.) It wouldn't be able to capture the depth and character of the Super NES game, would it?

But being the first Game Boy title developed by Shigeru Miyamoto's EAD team, this wasn't some minor *Zelda* spin-off. The story picked up after *A Link to the Past* and continued Link's adventure following the defeat of Ganon, as he set off on a one-man boat trip to train up as the Legendary Hero. When a storm cut his journey short, though, he washed up on the sandy shores of the mysterious Koholint Island.

While it may use the one-screen-at-a-time style of the original NES game, that's where the old-school design ends. Link's Awakening does absolutely everything in its limited capacity to be as influential and groundbreaking as any other *Zelda* title.

In a new twist, you can equip any two items in your inventory in tandem, often needing to use them together to solve puzzles. Once you have the Pegasus Boots and Roc's Feather, for example, you can perform a running leap over huge gaps in the ground. It was the first *Zelda* game to have a trading system, where you start with a simple item (a Yoshi Doll) and trade with NPCs throughout the game until you finally acquire the Magnifying Glass, which reveals some end-game secrets.

It was also the first game to have a wise old owl guide you through the story, a concept that later returned as Ocarina of Time's Kaepora Gaebora.

Link's Awakening was a triumph of design on the limited Game Boy hardware, and remains a wonderful adventure to experience today. You can download it as a 3DS Virtual Console title, but if you do you'll find it's actually "Link's Awakening DX" that's on sale in the eShop – that's the Game Boy Color re-release that first arrived on store shelves in 1998 and gave Koholint Island a welcome fresh coat of paint.

That became the first upgraded re-release of a previous *Zelda* game, which is a practice we're seeing in play more and more today. In fact, Link's Awakening DX added an extra dungeon during its porting process, which was the first influence toward *Twilight Princess*'s new Cave of Shadows. Pretty impactful for a Game Boy game! – MARK



1994

THE DISOWNED DISC GAMES

QUICK! CLOSE YOUR curtains. Lock your doors. Take an hour or two to make a thorough sweep of your home to ensure that no hidden cameras have been placed to track what you're reading.

All clear? OK. Because Nintendo really doesn't want you to know about these games.

There were two Legend of Zelda titles released in 1994 that have been completely disowned by the company. They're called "Link: The Faces of Evil" and "Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon," and the reason you may have never heard of them is because they didn't appear on Nintendo's hardware – rather, they were released on the ill-fated and now obscure Philips CD-i console. Their development traces back to Nintendo's fallout with Sony over the failed deal to create the "Nintendo PlayStation" as a CD-based add-on to the SNES. When that fell apart and Sony went their own way to make their own system, Nintendo partnered with Sony's rival Philips to continue exploring CD tech for their games. But then *that* deal also fell through, and somehow Philips ended up with the rights to make games on their own console starring Nintendo's characters.

And so arose *The Faces of Evil* and *The Wand of Gamelon*, two Zelda games that were not made by Nintendo, but rather an outside team who'd only had access to the first two NES games for reference (and the Legend of Zelda cartoon). Both games ended up playing as sidescrolling adventures, mostly similar to *Zelda II* – but peppered with animated cutscenes that have become the stuff of cringeworthy legend in the past two decades. You thought "Well, excuuuuuu me, Princess!" was painful? You haven't seen anything yet!

Listen, there's no beating around the bush – nearly everyone who's ever played these games thinks that they're terrible. But it's not really their fault! How would you have fared if you'd been asked to make a new Zelda game in the early '90s, completely independently from the series' actual creators? The developers at studio Animation Magic did the best they could given the circumstances, and even managed to hit a couple of high points – like including vibrant, painted backgrounds behind the action that took advantage of the CD medium's expanded storage capacity. The CD-i hardware just happened to hurt more than it helped, though, as the play control was terrible thanks to limited buttons – you had to push Up to jump!

But their greatest success? Making Princess Zelda the lead hero, which is something Nintendo has still never done themselves! (She even got a follow-up third CD-i game called *Zelda's Adventure* in 1995, but that one's even more despised . . .) – **LUCAS**



1995

THE 3D TRANSITION BEGINS

GAMING WAS POISED to enter a glorious new dimension in 1995 – the third, to be exact! Both the Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn had arrived in Japan the previous year, with worldwide rollouts to follow throughout this one.

Escaping the bounds of 2D gameplay, the next generation of consoles would help developers achieve all-new levels of realism and reach an even wider mainstream audience than ever before. However, fashionably late to the 3D party was Nintendo, which had yet to publicly demonstrate its evolutionary "Project Reality" console.

The lid was finally popped off during the 7th annual Shoshinkai Software Exhibition (a.k.a. Space World) in Tokyo on November 24, 1995. Over there, eager tech heads were given all the nitty-gritty details on the Nintendo 64, a machine that would ultimately signal a grand shift in Nintendo's position in the market, for better or worse. Those in attendance were allowed to sample an early build of *Super Mario 64* and check out footage reels of upcoming N64 titles – most of which would undergo heavy changes prior to release, though others would find a permanent home on the cutting room floor.

Aside from Mario, what caught most people's attention was a brief tech demo reel of a new N64 entry in the Legend of Zelda saga. Clocking in at a scant 12 seconds in length, this clip of a fleshed-out Link crossing blades with a shiny, highly reflective Darknut made waves across the globe, tantalizing children with its glorious potential.

At long last, we would finally be able to explore the Hyrule we envisioned in our minds all those years ago, with epic sword battles as beautiful as they were intense! How much longer would we need to wait until that fateful day? What new challenges would Link be forced to overcome? What new worlds would he explore? So many questions in need of answers!

Though development of "Zelda 64" ran concurrent with that of *Super Mario 64*, only the latter would be released in time for the hardware's launch in 1996. Nintendo instead hoped that the new Zelda would headline the 64DD, the disk drive attachment that would expand the N64's capabilities in much the same way the Famicom Disk System did for the Famicom.

Of course, we know in hindsight that those plans didn't pan out – the 64DD was saddled with multiple delays and eventually released only in Japan to a disinterested audience, while Zelda was repurposed into cartridge format for the base hardware.

Speaking of things that never left Japan, 1995 also brought us *BS Zelda no Denzetsu*, a spin-off/enhanced remake of the original NES *Zelda*, exclusive to the Satellaview modem peripheral for the Super Famicom. If you want to learn more about this provisional chapter in Zelda history, feel free to read all about it, and the Satellaview itself, on Pages 54 and 55 of this very issue! – **TONY**



1996

THE WAIT BEGINS

WE'RE SPOILED TODAY – I hope you know that. I mean, my goodness – we're seeing two different Legend of Zelda games release in the month of March. Two in the same month! Twilight Princess HD and Hyrule Warriors Legends, just three weeks apart! It's absolute insanity compared to the anguish we aged Zelda fans endured in the mid-'90s, as we slogged week by week, month by month and year by year through the interminable wait for The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

We discussed the anxiety of having to wait for Ocarina of Time in our last issue, where I made the claim that the wait time was "One Year, Two Months." And that's accurate from the perspective of game delays, which is what we were focusing on there – that period at the end of the game's development cycle when we thought it was supposed to already be available, and then it wasn't, was a killer for sure. But in the year or two prior to that – in the span of time after we'd all caught a glimpse of that Space World 1995 footage but before that tech demo had truly coalesced into a real game-in-progress that Nintendo felt comfortable showing off again – we were starved for any bit of information we could find.

New issues of Nintendo Power magazine were a godsend in those nascent Internet days, as the online Nintendo fandom had just begun to take shape. (Let me put it this way: There was no Google.) NP would occasionally publish screenshots of the game in development – which was called "Zelda 64" all the way up to June 1998 – and we slowly got see Link's first 3D world take shape.

But it was a rough time, young Zelda fans. Take it from an old man like me – it was dangerous to go long without some bit of new info! – **LUCAS**

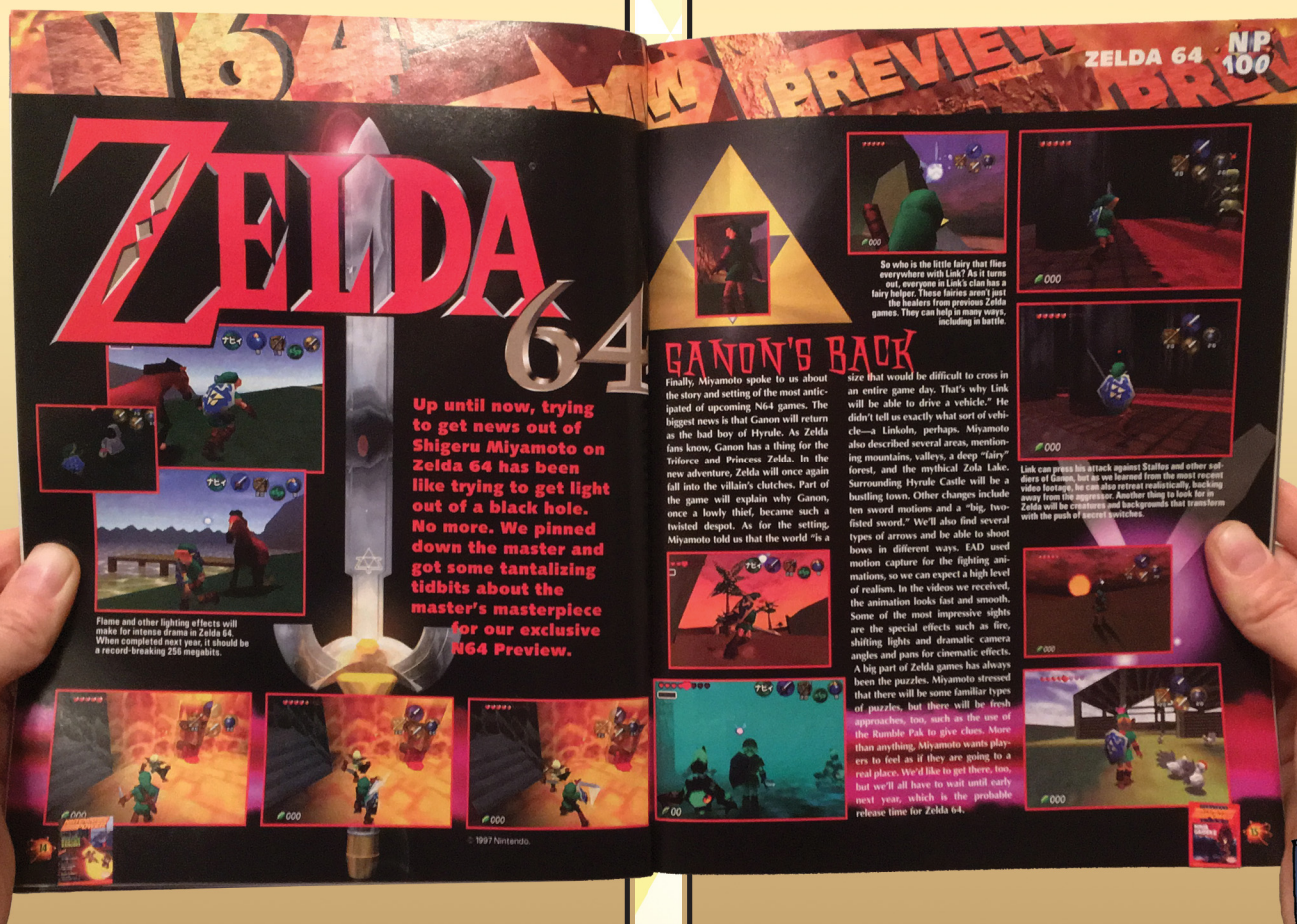
1997

THE WAIT CONTINUES

THE NINTENDO 64 console itself had arrived in late 1996 alongside the spectacular Super Mario 64, and throughout the year of 1997 we patient Zelda aficionados busied ourselves with the likes of Mario Kart 64, Diddy Kong Racing and the groundbreaking GoldenEye 007 – so it's not that we were enduring a total drought of Nintendo gaming goodness across the board. It's just that the Zelda brand itself was dormant – no new cartoon or comic, no new Game Boy game or anything else to take us back to the land of Hyrule. I probably replayed the first four titles quite a bit in these long months.

We began to see more and better glimpses at Zelda 64 throughout 1997, though (which probably made the wait both better and worse). The two-page spread you see below was featured in Nintendo Power's 100th issue in September 1997. It's funny to look back on now, in hindsight – we were just getting to learn about core features for the first time ever, like the fact that Link would have a tag-along fairy companion and that the game cartridge would be "a record-breaking 256 megabits." Ha! I miss getting excited about numbers like that.

Even more interesting than the accurate details conveyed through these early previews, though, is the inaccurate information – apparently Mr. Miyamoto claimed to the Nintendo Power crew that Link "will be able to drive a vehicle." Really? Did somebody mistranslate his words, or was he just being playful with the magazine staff? I mean, there are screens of Epona right there – surely they didn't think he'd be driving a minivan. Oh, and down at the bottom: "We'll all have to wait until early next year, which is the probable release time for Zelda 64." Wishful thinking, NP. – **LUCAS**



1998

AT LAST, THE MASTERPIECE

ON A PERSONAL level, 1998 marked a major step forward in my relationship with the Zelda series. Up until this point, my only exposure to the games were a few brief sessions of *A Link to the Past* at my friend's house. I decided now was the time to take the plunge, which I did by entering a Target store that summer and walking out with a copy of *Link's Awakening*. And it was every bit as incredible as *Nintendo Power* made it out to be!

Had I waited until December, I could have picked up *Link's Awakening DX*, which sported several nifty enhancements, the biggest of which was the extra Color Dungeon accessible only by playing the game on the recently released Game Boy Color. No buyer's remorse here, though!

Aside from that, nothing else of major significance transpired during 1998. A rather low-key year, in retrospect.

Oh . . . there was *Ocarina of Time* too, I guess.

All joking aside, *Ocarina of Time* may be not only the most important installment in the entire Legend of Zelda franchise, but also one of the most influential video games ever made. Its release could be considered a true watershed moment for the entire industry, advancing the action/adventure genre in much the same fashion as *Super Mario 64* advanced the platformer genre two years prior. As a testament to its enduring stature, it remains the top-ranked game of all time on review aggregate site Metacritic, and is second (just under *Super Mario Galaxy*) on sister site GameRankings.

What was it that elevated this particular title to such inconceivable heights? Was it the story? Link's quest to thwart Ganondorf's rise to power by passing between two time periods echoed the Light World/Dark World dichotomy of *A Link to the Past*. Inventive new items? Link's bag of goodies shockingly didn't include anything that hadn't been seen in adventures past. Navi!? Eeh!

But then there was Z-targeting, a brilliant yet simple mechanic that helped players focus on battling enemies one at a time, thereby solving one of the most annoying elements of combat in 3D space. There was the introduction of Sheik, the enigmatic ally whose 11th hour reveal as *Zelda's* alter ego added a refreshing new dimension to the young princess' character, in addition to becoming a popular character all her own in more action-oriented games like *Super Smash Bros. Melee* and *Hyrule Warriors*. And, of course, there was the grand realization of the one-on-one sword combat that we'd been waiting for since the 1995 *Space World* tech demo!

The truth is that *Ocarina of Time's* greatness is a combination of many bits and pieces that helped form a cohesive whole, and to list them all would take much more room than I have left on this page. Not that I won't try, mind you! Let's see . . . there's Epona

the horse, the day-night cycle, the transformation of Hyrule Castle Town into a zombie wasteland, the incredibly awesome music of Gerudo Valley, the . . .

— TONY



1999

THE DOOMED DISK DRIVE

WHEN NINTENDO FIRST planned out their software lineup for the Nintendo 64 hardware, they wanted to make it an echo of what had worked on the Famicom: having Mario lead the charge for standard cartridges on the base system, then using *The Legend of Zelda* to champion an add-on disk system that would come along later. For years, *Zelda 64* was developed with the assumption that its release format would be a disk, and that it would be the game that launched the Nintendo 64 Disk Drive.

Well, it didn't work out that way the second time around. The 64DD was a failure almost from Day 1, because it didn't hit store shelves in Japan until 1999 – when, clearly, its planned launch game had already cast it aside and just gone ahead with a standard cartridge release the year prior.

It still might not have been such a bad situation, though, because Nintendo assured *Zelda* fans that more 64DD-exclusive games were in the works. A pair of them were planned, and were known in development as "*Zelda Gaiden*" and "*Ura Zelda*."

Zelda Gaiden you're going to read more about when you turn the page and see the highlight of the year 2000, because as it moved through development it transformed into *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*. Not a disk game! Another cartridge release, just as *Ocarina of Time* was.

Which left *Ura Zelda* – which is, to this day, still a nebulous, undefined, uncertain project. *Ura Zelda* meant, simply, "Another *Zelda*." It was said to have been an expansion of *Ocarina of Time* – you would have placed the OoT cartridge in the top slot and then the *Ura Zelda* disk in the bottom one and the data on the disk would patch *Ocarina's* adventure to include all-new areas, dungeons and items.

The glimpses we got of it as a work in progress during this time were enticing – there was going to be a new dungeon called the "Unicorn Fountain," and supposedly the end goal of the *Ura Zelda* quest was going to be finding and claiming the Triforce, which was left out of *Ocarina of Time*. (Though much of *Zelda* fans' time throughout 1999 was spent trying to find some way to discover the Triforce in *Ocarina* as it was, without any expansion.)

Ura Zelda was never completed, which made Nintendo three for three on not following through on the promise to bring a *Zelda* title to the 64DD. The poor, neglected disk drive flopped and never left Japan.

Some elements of *Ura Zelda* may have lived on, though, through a release called *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time Master Quest*. That was a game that Nintendo offered to GameCube owners as a pre-order bonus for putting money down on *The Wind Waker* a few years after the whole 64DD fiasco. *Master Quest* had remixed dungeons and a greater degree of difficulty while using *Ocarina of Time* as its base, which is what *Ura Zelda* was supposed to be – but *Zelda* experts' opinions are split as to whether or not it truly contained any of *Ura Zelda's* content. — LUCAS



2000

TIME TRAVEL IN TERMINA

BY THE YEAR 2000, the Nintendo 64 was quickly nearing the end of its life cycle, but it still had one more Zelda epic in store for fans before it took its place in the annals of history. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask was released in Japan on April 27 and in North America on October 26 – the same day that Sony's PlayStation 2 made its North American debut. Despite this inopportune timing, Majora's Mask turned out to be another instant classic for the N64, taking the series into much darker territory than ever before.

Set several months after Ocarina of Time, the game chronicled Link's journey through Termina, a strange facsimile of Hyrule that was destined to be crushed by its moon in just three short days. This unusual premise became the game's defining feature, as Link had a mere 72 hours of in-game time to stop the moon's descent; when he inevitably couldn't, players had to rewind the clock and relive the cycle all over again, making a little more headway each time. Majora's Mask's unique time travel and darker storyline helped it to become a favorite among Zelda fans, and new fans were introduced to it through its 3DS remake just last year!

With its last major first-party release for the N64 behind it, Nintendo turned its attention to the next generation, and in August of 2000 officially unveiled the Nintendo GameCube to the public at its annual Space World trade show. Alongside the hardware and its unorthodox controller, the company showed off a number of early technical demos for the console, giving eager fans a tantalizing glimpse at what the tiny system was capable of. The most stunning of these was undoubtedly a brief sword fight between Link and Ganondorf, rendered in jaw-dropping detail. Despite only running a handful of seconds, the video immediately captured fans' attention, and many took it as an indication that a new Zelda title was already in the works and that it would look something like Nintendo's tech demo. Little did they know, Link's first GameCube outing would turn out to be much different . . . – **KEVIN K.**



2001

THE PORTABLE PAIR

THE N64 WASN'T the only Nintendo system sputtering along on life support at the turn of the century – the Game Boy Color also found itself in a similar position. Despite a late resurgence thanks to the overwhelming popularity of Pokémon, the handheld was unquestionably showing its age by 2001, and it wouldn't be too much longer until it was supplanted by the Game Boy Advance. Like the N64, however, the GBC had one final Zelda adventure in store for fans before it was unceremoniously retired.

Or, rather, it had one final *pair* of Zelda adventures. In an unprecedented move, Nintendo published two interconnected Zelda games simultaneously in May 2001 – The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages and The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons, both of which were developed by Capcom subsidiary Flagship (the first time that an outside developer was permitted to create mainline installments in the venerated franchise).

Despite their similar titles, Oracle of Ages and Oracle of Seasons were two wholly distinct adventures. Ages saw Link transported to the land of Labrynna, where a wicked sorceress named Veran had possessed the Oracle of Ages and disrupted the flow of time; Seasons whisked Link to the land of Holodrum, where the General of Darkness Onox had abducted the Oracle of Seasons and thrown nature into disarray.

While each version was marketed as its own standalone adventure, fans who purchased both were treated to a surprising twist: After clearing one title, the game would generate a password that could be entered into the other one, allowing players to link the two games up and turn them into one extended adventure. It was an ambitious idea that established Flagship as capable stewards of the Zelda franchise, and served as an appropriately epic swan song for the GBC.

Meanwhile, on the home console front, Nintendo was gearing up to reveal the first Zelda title for the Nintendo GameCube. With the impressive Zelda Space World tech demo still in everyone's mind, fans were eager to see what direction the series would take on Nintendo's new hardware. As it turns out, most would not be pleased when they saw their first glimpse at what would later be known as The Wind Waker. The teenaged, realistic Link from the previous year's demo had undergone a radical transformation into a squat, doe-eyed child running around a cartoony world. Fans were immediately furious at the change, and many swore the game off based on the new visuals alone. History would ultimately prove these detractors wrong, but by the end of 2001, many had serious reservations about the future of the franchise. – **KEVIN K.**



2002

FOUR TIMES THE FUN

FANS DON'T OFTEN think of 2002 as a blowout year for the Zelda franchise, but in my home, it was one of the best. What could I be referring to? Why, the re-release of *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* on the Game Boy Advance, of course!

Naturally, most of my excitement doesn't lie in a simple port job. It's with *Four Swords*, which is my favorite Zelda game to date. It's a completely unconventional pick, I know, but as the first true multiplayer title in the Zelda series' history, it immediately spoke to me.

For years I had been playing series like *Mega Man* and *Zelda*, wishing that they had fully fledged multiplayer components in tow. While there was the one-off minigame on occasion (like the secret fighting game in *Mega Man 7*), my prayers were totally answered with *Four Swords*.

Finally, I could team up with some of my best buddies and play a real Zelda game side by side with them. Sure it took a bit of legwork, forcing players to use cumbersome link cables – an extra expense – but I'll never forget that process.

While the emphasis was on co-op play and divining solutions to dungeons on the fly, there was a competitive element to it too, as the player who reached the end first was rewarded with a Heart Container. It was the perfect balance of cooperation and friendly competition that Nintendo's seemingly always been known for, as it incentivized players without causing massive arguments. (That is, unless one person was constantly drawing from the shared Rupee pool to come back to life. Aargh!)

As a cherry on top, Nintendo rewarded those who progressed through either part of the package on the same cart. You could unlock the sword beam move by playing *A Link to the Past*, and by beating both, a brand-new dungeon was unlocked in the core game.

Four Swords would later be re-released in standalone Anniversary form as a DSiWare title in 2011, which added in the ability to play by yourself. *Four Swords* also influenced two other spin-offs in the franchise in years that followed: *Four Swords Adventures* for the GameCube and the recently released *Tri Force Heroes*. It's a tried-and-true formula, to say the least!

Oh, and lest we forget, Nintendo decided to release *The Wind Waker* into the world, as it arrived right at the end of 2002 in Japan. True to his word, Miyamoto and Nintendo had showcased a playable version of the game at E3 earlier in the year, and after the severely negative reaction to its visual style the year before, just about everyone who actually played it fell in love with the cel-shaded look. The rest of the world didn't get to pop their discs in until 2003, but as we all know, it was well worth the wait!

– CHRIS



2003

LINK SETS SAIL

AFTER A FEW delays, March 24, 2003, at last saw the Stateside release of *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, the first Zelda game for the GameCube system.

While the game was praised with critical acclaim upon its release, it was still quite controversial due to the lingering shadow of fans' backlash against its art style from just a couple of years before. Some fans continued to hold a grudge against the "Celda" look, but most longtime Hyrulian heroes had gotten over the shock and dove right into the waters of *The Wind Waker*'s flooded version of the classic kingdom.

Once players were into the action, they discovered the beautifully fluid and colorful cel-shading made the game look more like a wonderfully animated cartoon than the polygons in motion of the previous two 3D Zeldas. *The Wind Waker* also made waves by introducing several new game mechanics into the Zelda repertoire. The most obvious of these was Link's new sailing function: *Wind Waker*'s world was a never-ending sea dotted by many small islands, so harnessing the wind with the sails of his talking boat companion, the King of Red Lions, was his primary way to travel. The sailing aspect did have its critics, of course, many of whom said that there was simply too much of it in the latter half of the game.

The Wind Waker also gave us another action-packed identity for Zelda (spoiler alert!) in the form of Tetra, the pirate captain. Tetra didn't even know she was Zelda until late into the game, which made for a great plot twist – as did the discovery of the fate of Hyrule itself. The final battle against Ganondorf was considered one of the best in Zelda's long history, and it still holds up extremely well today.

Beyond the release of *The Wind Waker*, 2003 was also notable for its release of a special Zelda-themed compilation disc called *The Legend of Zelda: Collector's Edition*. This compilation contained four past Zelda games: the original *Legend of Zelda*, *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link*, *Ocarina of Time*, and *Majora's Mask*. It also held a playable demo of *The Wind Waker*, as well as a couple of videos. This disc was only available through a special GameCube bundle, subscribing or resubscribing to *Nintendo Power* magazine or registering two games on Nintendo's website.

– THOR



2004

THE MOST EPIC E3 MOMENT

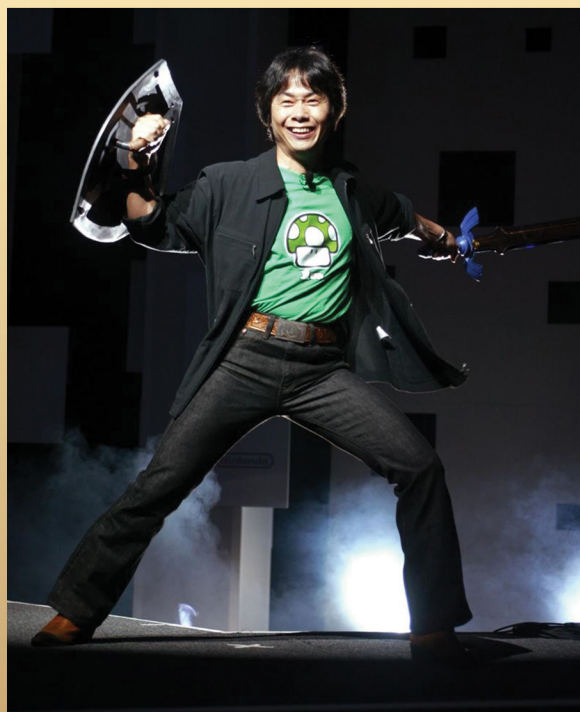
I WAS THERE! I was sitting right there, in person. Maybe 40 feet from the stage, sharing a beanbag chair with my brother on the floor. I was there when the soundtrack from Conan the Barbarian swelled and, for the first time in years, an Adult Link appeared to herald the arrival of the next new Legend of Zelda.

The entire crowd was instantly on their feet. Clapping. Shouting. Crying! It was exactly what the fans wanted to see, exactly when they needed to see it.

It was the most epic moment in the history of Nintendo's E3 presentations – the reveal of the game that would go on to become The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. After the incredible teaser trailer played out – including such cheer-inducing, intense taglines as "Blades Will Bleed" – the man himself, Shigeru Miyamoto, leapt onto the stage wielding Link's Master Sword and Hylian Shield. It was like something out of a dream! But I assure you it was real, and I encourage you to view the moment for yourself if you never have before – several cameras recorded it happening, and YouTube's preserved the footage for future generations.

There's something incredibly powerful about contrast, you know. You can only really appreciate a gorgeous, sunny day in the spring if you've just lived through a dark, cold winter. Sometimes there are people in your life who have more of an impact on you than you realize – until it dawns on you after they're gone. And so it was with the Legend of Zelda series at that E3 2004 press briefing. Had the cel-shaded visual style not been so poorly received – or had Nintendo never gone that route in the first place – then the fans' demands for something more adult, more realistic, more in line with what they thought Zelda should be... they wouldn't have existed. The Wind Waker had to anger the fans so that, years later, Twilight Princess could make them cry with joy.

When Mr. Miyamoto took the stage, he said, "Even after 18 years, The Legend of Zelda never stops changing – and this game is no different. We are taking you to a new world where Link has grown up. A world where he will act different – and look different. In order to grow, Link must not stand still. And neither can I." – **LUCAS**



2005

LINK SHRINKS

RELEASED FOR THE Game Boy Advance at the end of 2004 in Japan and Europe and the beginning of 2005 in North America, The Minish Cap was the last Legend of Zelda title to appear on the Game Boy family of systems. Developed by Flagship (the Capcom team that had previously made Oracle of Seasons and Oracle of Ages) under supervision from Nintendo, it is the third game (but the first title chronologically) in the saga of the Four Sword.

The Picori – or the Minish, as they call themselves – are a tribe of tiny creatures who once bestowed a legendary hero with the Picori Blade and a power called the Light Force. They live in secret, inhabiting the spaces underneath floorboards or behind walls, and their goal in life is nothing more than to bring happiness to ordinary Hyrulians. They are the Zelda series' version of the famous real-world fairy tale The Elves and the Shoemaker, and they're said to only be seen by children – like our hero.

When the evil sorcerer Vaati crashes the annual Picori Festival, he breaks the Picori Blade and unleashes evil onto Hyrule. Princess Zelda and Link attempt to stop him, but Zelda is turned into stone in the process. Knowing that Link is their best chance of finding the Minish, the king sends Link to repair the sword. While exploring the forest, Link meets Ezlo – a talking green hat with a bird's head at the end, who is really Vaati's former master. Ezlo assists Link by using his power to shrink him down to the size of a Minish, so that he can explore the nooks and crannies of Hyrule.

While Minish Cap is one of Link's shorter adventures (no pun intended), it's got the "two separate worlds" theme that's common in a lot of Zelda games, thanks to Link shrinking. When he's tiny, fields of clover become vast forests, a rainstorm can be painful and weak enemies like Chuchus become level bosses! Luckily, Link learns some fancy new blade skills and uses the Four Sword's power to create copies of himself to perform tasks where two (or more) Links are better than one. There are also a couple of major sidequests – Kinestone fusion and figurine collecting – that unlock treasures, Pieces of Heart and other surprises! Minish Cap may have taken place on a small scale, but it was hugely fun to play. – **REBECCA**



2006

TINGLE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THIS WAS THE year that the Zelda series turned 20, and like many young adults, the franchise seemed to have one foot planted in its whimsical childhood and the other stretching toward greater levels of "maturity." It was a time when Nintendo was still trying to make sense out of the fans' reaction to *The Wind Waker*, a game that mixed cute, kid-friendly graphics with post-apocalyptic themes and some scenes of graphic violence. It was not the hit that Nintendo might have hoped for (at least at the time), which could be part of why after two decades of growth, the Zelda series finally split into two opposite – but equally interesting – directions.

The first, mainstream and "serious" direction was marked by the release of *Twilight Princess*, a game that rejected the bulk of *Wind Waker*'s whimsy by returning Adult Link to the forefront, transforming him into a wolf and sending him off on dark and unpredictable adventures (much more on that in our Reviews section later on).

Less talked about was the new, goofy, oddball spin-off tangent of the brand marked by the launch of Tingle's *Freshly Picked Rosy Rupeeland*, a game that was almost everything that *Twilight Princess* was not. Whereas *Twilight Princess* used realistic polygon-based graphics to take Link on an action-packed, Ladyhawke-inspired journey, *Rosy Rupeeland* utilized cute and quirky 2D sprites to tell Tingle's tongue-in-cheek tale of comical capitalist conquest. The stark contrast between the two games wasn't just reflective of the Zelda series' growing pains – it was also indicative of a split between Zelda fans that could be felt around the world.

After *Freshly Picked Rosy Rupeeland*, Tingle would go on to star in three more DS games in Japan. The little 35-year-old fairy cosplayer was a hit! . . . Well, at least in his native country, where he was a perfect fit for the budding "kimo-kawaii" (ugly-cute) movement that was ballooning in Japanese pop culture at the time. As a semi-parody of otaku in general, and of Zelda fans in particular, Tingle also worked to allow Japanese "nerds" to laugh at themselves in a communal, lighthearted way.

Sadly, that kind of self-parody was a big turn-off for many Western gamers. Poor Tingle inspired a very unfavorable response on a Nintendo of America online poll held around that time, and popular gaming website IGN even went as far as to start a "Die Tingle Die" campaign designed to spread hate for the character. GamesRadar also joined in on the anti-Tingle chorus, calling him "Zelda's Jar Jar." It was clear that Tingle had become a man that the Western gaming press loved to hate, which might explain why he was completely missing from *Twilight Princess*, and why just one of his DS games was ever localized in English, by Nintendo of Europe, to relatively poor sales.

Since then, Tingle's Western fanbase has grown more proud and vocal, so it's hard to say what the future holds for our much loved, often misunderstood, high-flying, confetti-tossing, mapmaking ex-convict. Here's Kooloo-looking at you, little guy! – **JONATHAN**



2007

THE FAILED FILM PITCH

NINTENDO'S ADHERENCE TO its philosophy of innovation can be both a blessing and a curse. This is evident in the first Zelda game for the DS, *Phantom Hourglass*, which eschewed button commands for purely stylus-driven gameplay in order to provide a more inviting Zelda experience for newcomers.

Phantom Hourglass is a decent game – it certainly reviewed well at the time, with critics praising the fluidity of the new controls and the decision to return to the world of *The Wind Waker*. Opinions among longtime fans, however, were divided. It seemed as though the stylus controls – which admittedly worked quite well – simply repurposed familiar actions and items, resulting in a game that may have played differently but looked far too similar to previous Zeldas.

Touch control proponents and detractors could at least both agree that the Temple of the Ocean King was the game's lowest point. Throughout the adventure, Link had to revisit this same massive dungeon again and again, using newly acquired skills to traverse further than before each time, always being mindful of a timer that limited how long he could remain underground. It's not difficult to see how players could grow weary of retracing their steps for the umpteenth time – how many people do you know who enjoy such deliberate cases of artificial game length padding?

But as players were exploring the Great Sea once again, plans of a more "cinematic" nature were brewing behind the scenes. Imagi Animation Studios, which released *TMNT* in theaters early that year and would go on to produce *Astro Boy* in 2009, had dreams of bringing Hyrule to the big screen. To that end, Imagi put together a roughly 90-second animation sample and pitched it to Nintendo.

In the clip – which was leaked online in 2013 – Zelda and her guard detail are transporting a box containing some unseen relic, only to be ambushed by a band of shadowy monsters. With her back against the wall, Link arrives on Epona to deliver the gift of arrows to the unholy beasts. The video ends just as Ganondorf arrives with blade in hand, prompting Link to unsheathe his Master Sword.

If you're wondering why you don't have a ticket stub for the Legend of Zelda movie stashed away in a memories scrapbook, it's because the pitch was sadly shot down. Not too surprising, considering how wary Nintendo has been of allowing its characters to be translated to film since the Super Mario Bros. movie disaster all the way back in 1993.

Still, among Nintendo's stable of world-famous series, the expanded Zelda universe feels most ripe for a motion picture adaptation. The knowledge that at least one major studio was prepared to make the effort yet was denied causes nothing but heartache, and with Imagi's closure in 2010, that's one less studio willing to give one of gaming's greatest franchises a shot at Hollywood stardom.

I like to think there's still some hope for a Zelda film in the future, though. *Animal Crossing* received the film treatment in Japan back in 2006, after all, and Nintendo seems even more willing these days to license its icons to any company that wants to play ball. Look, if Nintendo had no problem letting Mario and Donkey Kong appear in that Adam Sandler abomination *Pixels*, Link should absolutely be allowed his long-overdue high fantasy epic! – **TONY**



2008

THE APRIL FOOLS' PRANK

I WAS THERE! Again, oddly bearing witness to a unique Legend of Zelda moment that few others got to see in person. It was in Los Angeles once again, but not at an E3 event – rather, what I witnessed was in a conference room at the LA offices of IGN, where I was visiting my colleagues of that era, Matt Casamassina and Mark Bozon. The two of them excitedly shuffled me through the door to show me what was laid out across the tables inside: armor. And weapons. And maybe even an ocarina or two? It's hard to remember all the details exactly.

What I was being let in on was an early planning meeting with the film producer IGN had contracted to create a live-action Legend of Zelda movie. Not a whole movie, though – just a few minutes' worth of one. Just enough footage to be able to stitch together a trailer, which would then be uploaded to the site and presented as legitimate on the next April Fools' Day.

And you know what? Everything went precisely according to plan. IGN completed the fake Zelda film trailer and pushed it live, and people fell for it in the thousands. Maybe not everyone was duped – I couldn't have been, of course, since I saw the thing coming together – but for a brief moment in time on April 1, 2008, thousands of Legend of Zelda fans thought that the series' cinematic debut was imminent.

Though nothing ever materialized from Imagi's 2007 proof-of-concept pitch and IGN's 2008 live-action trailer was nothing but a ruse, I'll stand with Tony in the opinion that The Legend of Zelda could make the transition to the silver screen well. There was that recent rumor that Netflix was doing something with the series, and even more recently Disney's been attached to the idea . . . so who knows? It may happen yet! – **LUCAS**



2009

A FIRST GLIMPSE OF FI

BACK IN JUNE of 2009, Nintendo was showcasing several strong titles at E3, like New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Super Mario Galaxy 2 and Metroid: Other M (hey, we were hyped at the time). But one exclusive preview that Shigeru Miyamoto gave to only a select few got the most attention that year: a single piece of concept art (shown below) featuring Link standing back to back with a mysterious female.

Mr. Miyamoto slyly noted to the painting's viewers that Link was not holding his iconic sword, which started a lot of speculation as to what this mysterious figure's true identity could be. She had some very familiar components to her design: a diamond-shaped stone on her chest, criss-cross patterns on her legs like leather wrapped around a sword's grip and the way the fabric hanging over her shoulders and arms draped and rippled. When the rest of the world got to see this first image, many people speculated – rightly, as it turns out – that she was some sort of personification of the Master Sword. Mr. Miyamoto also gave some other hints about the game that would ultimately be known as Skyward Sword, including the fact that they were developing improved swordfighting controls, likely involving the Wii MotionPlus peripheral that would be releasing worldwide later that month – but the game was still years away.

The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, the second Zelda title to appear on the Nintendo DS, arrived much sooner – in December 2009. Taking place a century after the events of The Wind Waker and Phantom Hourglass, it features Link in the somewhat anachronistic role as an apprentice engineer for Hyrule's railway system. When Princess Zelda becomes suspicious of Chancellor Cole from her royal court, she enlists Link's help to investigate, but ends up having her spirit severed from her body by Cole so he can use her body to resurrect the demon king, Malladus. The Spirit Tracks that make up the railway system are what binds Malladus to his prison, and they're beginning to disappear! Overworld travel involved Link's Spirit Train, which could be equipped with a cannon to clear the rails and could carry passengers and cargo. In dungeons, the game used the same stylus-based controls from Phantom Hourglass, with one added feature: Link could make Zelda's spirit possess Phantoms, which can act as bodyguards or assist Link in solving puzzles. – **REBECCA**



2010

A NEW ERA OF CONTROL

AFTER TEASING US with nothing more than that single piece of concept art at E3 2009 and making us wait an entire year to learn anything more, Nintendo opened the floodgates at E3 2010 and fully unveiled The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword. Its debut trailer meant to capture the legacy of all the 3D Zeldas so far, then present their next natural point of gameplay evolution: motion-controlled combat!

Yes, the Wii had been with us for nearly four years at this point, but no title had yet made good on one of the earliest promises made for the Wii Remote: true, 1:1 sword-swinging combat. In truth, the standard Wii Remote controller made available with the system's launch in 2006 just wasn't sophisticated enough to be up to the task – Nintendo had to wait until the Wii MotionPlus peripheral was invented years later for true, fluid bladework to become a possibility. Wii Sports Resort debuted the motion-enhancing add-on the year prior, and so 2010 was finally the time Nintendo pressed it into service for a proper adventure.

Nearly everything in Skyward Sword was geared toward motion control. To some fans' dismay, sure – opinions are even split among the members of our Nintendo Force team about whether the designers went overboard, as shield-bashing, swimming, the flying Beetle item and much, much more all leveraged hand and wrist movements in some way.

But whether or not it was wise to overexert the Wii Remote in all of those other areas of the game design, I think you've got to give due credit to the core swordfighting experience. No longer were battles against foes simple button-mashing moments where you hammered on the sword button again and again until the baddies fell down and turned into a puff of smoke – now, even minor enemies could block your attacks and force you to work out just the exact right angle and precise timing needed to tag them with a slash.

Skyward Sword didn't just innovate through its method of play control, though – Nintendo also pursued an all-new visual style to render its world as well. Inspired by impressionist art, the world and its characters looked like they could have just stepped out of a famous painting by Cézanne. The style was met with some negativity on its reveal, but nothing anywhere near as severe as the Celda outrage of '01. Fans seemed to have calmed down by this point. – **LUCAS**



2011

LINK TAKES FLIGHT

SKYWARD SWORD WAS meant to launch on Wii later in 2010, serving as Nintendo's big holiday release that year – but as we've learned with mainline Zeldas, delays will always happen. The game got bumped into 2011, and ultimately late in 2011 – November 20, to be exact.

The delay was such that another Zelda title beat it to store shelves, earlier in the year – or several, really, if you want to count eShop re-releases. (And I do.)

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D went on sale on June 19 for the 3DS, helping to build momentum for that new handheld – it had only just debuted itself a few months earlier, in March. A vibrant remake of the series' first three-dimensional epic, it was only fitting for it to finally be viewable in real, stereoscopic 3D – giving depth and extra dimension to everything from Dekus to Dodongos. The 3DS had an incredibly rough first few months there in the middle of 2011, and Ocarina of Time 3D was an important bright spot in what was looking, at the time, like a failed portable launch.

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX helped as well, showing up in Virtual Console form to launch Game Boy games into the brand-new 3DS eShop. And also made available on Nintendo's portables was a special Anniversary Edition of Four Swords – which the company actually gave away as a free DSiWare download just to celebrate the series' 25th anniversary!

Oh yeah . . . that's why Nintendo was so Zelda-happy in 2011. It was the year Link turned a quarter-century old, precisely five years ago from where we are now! The celebration encompassed the entire year, with a special orchestral CD being released, the launch of the Hyrule Historia book in Japan (more on that later) and even a new tech demo showcased at E3 2011 called the Zelda HD Experience meant to give attendees an idea of what the series' future might look like in high definition on Wii U. (We'll see if any of its elements make the cut in the final game later this year!)

But the release of Skyward Sword was the true centerpiece of the entire celebration, even though it happened so late into the year. I'll never forget it, personally, as it launched exactly two weeks after my firstborn son Carter made his arrival! I'll always remember playing it while trying to hold him in my arms at the same time – which was made extra difficult by the fact that everything was motion-controlled. It's hard to swing a sword and keep an infant asleep at the same time! – **LUCAS**



2012

THE CONCERT SERIES

BEETHOVEN, TCHAIKOVSKY, BACH . . . Kondo?

Nintendo's golden maestro may seem out of place among the pantheon of legendary composers, but as the popularity of video game symphonies continues to grow, so too does the prestige of the formerly unsung heroes of game development. Who else but a musical virtuoso could hammer out a 30- to 40-second melody that warms our cores so many decades later?

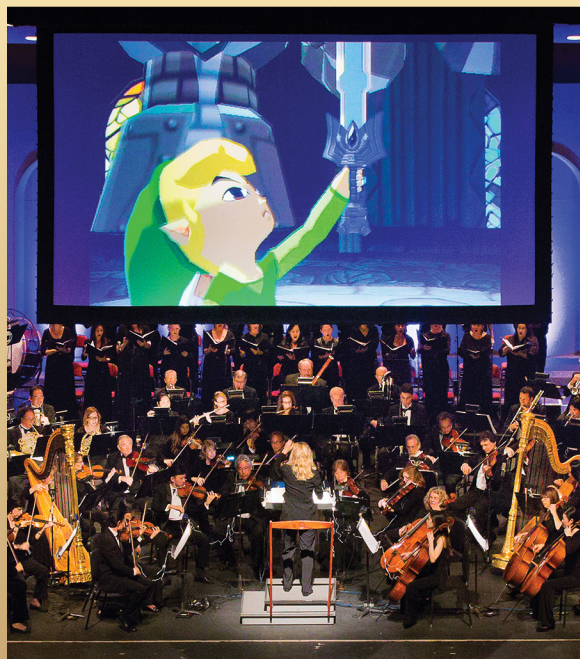
To celebrate the Zelda series' 25th anniversary in 2011, Nintendo teamed up with music production company Jason Michael Paul Productions to organize a series of concerts in Tokyo, Los Angeles and London. If you couldn't attend, no worries! Select pieces arranged for the concerts were compiled onto a CD bundled with all first print runs of *Skyward Sword*. Ah, the epic soundscapes of Hyrule as performed by a full orchestra – the way they were meant to be heard!

But that was only the beginning! Jason Michael Paul had an even grander vision of a yearlong tour across America. This expanded series, christened *The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses*, held its first performance on January 10, 2012 – in front of a sold-out room at the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, Texas – with subsequent shows stretching as far north as Calgary in Alberta, Canada.

A *Symphony of the Goddesses* show is, in a word, magic. Nostalgic tunes carry through the air as curated gameplay footage synced to the music is projected onto a large screen. Don't be surprised if a few attendees shed a tear as they relive childhood memories! And if you're extra fortunate, you may even bear witness to a patron who has chosen that evening to propose to their significant other – irrefutable proof that *Zelda* music has the power to link mind, body and soul!

So popular was the series that it returned for a 2013 season – a "Second Quest," if you will – which incorporated *Spirit Tracks* arrangements and took to the international stage.

Then, following a one-year hiatus, the "Master Quest" kicked off in 2015 and continues to run through this year, now with music from *A Link Between Worlds* and *Tri Force Heroes* included as well. If you've never been, you owe it to yourself take in at least one performance the next time it rolls into a town near you! For schedule and ticket information, visit zelda-symphony.com. – TONY



2013

LINK, THE GRAFITTI ARTIST

WHILE 2011 MAY have been the 25th anniversary of *The Legend of Zelda*, it was 2013 that was the year of celebrating its history for fans in the West.

One of the ways in which this history was observed was with the release of *The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia*, a book full of all kinds of art, facts and artifacts about the series' history that had originally been published in Japan during the aforementioned 25th anniversary celebration. Thanks to the efforts of Dark Horse Comics, fans outside of Japan could now fully behold and enjoy the journey of Link from the original game up to the present day, as well as an exclusive manga which acts as a prequel to *Skyward Sword* and the entire series.

Perhaps the most celebrated/maligned part of the entire book, however, is the release of the official timeline for the entire *Zelda* series up to that point. Long said to be a document stored away in the darkest depths of Nintendo's Japanese headquarters and kept secret enough that some questioned whether or not it even really existed, this official record of the series' connected lore revealed that just as fans had commonly believed, there was actually more than one timeline that split out of *Ocarina of Time*. What some did not expect, on the other hand, was that there were actually *three* timelines from that point!

As fans debated the logic and inconsistencies of the *Hyrule Historia* timeline explanation, the year of 2013 concluded with a new addition to the branch of the timeline that had been most ignored in the modern era. *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds* was positioned as a direct sequel to *A Link to the Past*, bringing back the same style of gameplay and the same basic map of Hyrule, albeit with the changes you might expect to come over a couple of centuries.

Rather than the Dark World of the Super NES classic, *A Link Between Worlds* instead focused on a parallel universe known as Lorule, from which the villainous Yuga had traveled to Hyrule with designs on stealing its Triforce. Other new characters introduced to the lore of *Zelda* include the violet-haired ruler of Lorule, Princess Hilda, and a lazy merchant known as Ravio, who sets up shop in Link's own house and rents items to him, effectively allowing him to take on the world's dungeons in almost any order.

To stop Yuga, Link must not only master many of the weapons and items that have become well known over the series' history, but also a new ability: He can merge with walls as a painting of himself, allowing him to reach areas that would otherwise be inaccessible!

Finally, the *Zelda* series got its first HD remake in 2013 as well: the vibrantly revisualized *Wind Waker HD* for Wii U. If you missed Link's first adventure at sea on the GameCube, the remake's a great way to set sail into that watery world! – DAVID



2014

FIRST LOOK AT THE NEW LINK

I THINK IT'S safe to say that Nintendo's 2014 E3 showing was one of their best, right? The hype for Super Smash Bros. for Wii U & Nintendo 3DS was at an all-time high with playable 4P battles on the show floor, new character reveals and a full invitational tournament. Titles starring familiar faces like Kirby and Yoshi had strong showings alongside the freshness of surprise hit Splatoon. And, of course, we got our first glimpse of The Legend of Zelda for Wii U.

The reveal itself took a slightly different approach than Nintendo's usual game debut trailers, with longtime series director Eiji Aonuma addressing fans against a white background. After a brief introduction, the curtain was pulled back to reveal a gorgeously lush peek at a new Hyrule: a vibrant, colorful HD landscape that appeared far more vast than any prior overworld. And the trailer ended with a cinematic chase through a clearing where we got a few glimpses of how things were different: Link's new design, an ethereal high-tech bow and a mechanized, munition-packed monster.

By all accounts, it was a stunning reveal. The gorgeous art benefits from Nintendo's own experience working on Wind Waker, Twilight Princess and Skyward Sword, blending stylized cel-shaded vibrancy with rolling, inviting vistas overflowing with detail. Adult Link is back – sporting some new blue duds, a cloak and a small ponytail – and so is Epona, also with an updated look of her own.

Mr. Aonuma specifically looked to the past when designing this game's overworld, noting that the original NES Zelda let players explore a large, open-ended world, but once the series went to 3D, it was difficult to match that scope and scale until now.

To drive this point home further, Mr. Aonuma and Mr. Miyamoto gave a hands-on demonstration of the game's overworld at The Game Awards in December 2014. Using the aid of a map on the GamePad, they ran, rode and Sailcloth-ed their way through a variety of naturalistic landscapes that all point to one truth: This game will be huge. It's absolutely on track to be the most ambitious Zelda title yet.

Perhaps *too* ambitious, as it turns out, because the game ended up getting pushed out of 2015 due to the sheer scope of the project. But hey, as we already discussed in our last issue, some things are worth the wait!

Beyond those reveals and a few cool gameplay details here and there (like the new mid-air archery move), much of the title is shrouded in mystery. Naturally, with NX rumors abuzz you have to wonder if this game will get a Twilight Princess-style dual release across platforms.

Either way, I'm all in for this next installment. I'm a massive fan of the original Zelda, so I couldn't imagine a better reveal for the new game than this one. It speaks volumes that even with an E3 containing Nintendo's best new IP of the millennium and the most feature-packed, exciting Smash Bros. to date, the Zelda reveal was still the top moment for me!

Finally, 2014 also gave Zelda fans one last treat with the release of the Wii U version of Hyrule Warriors – an epic crossover that brought together the key characters of several previous sequels in the series and let them loose to destroy hundreds of enemies at once on crowded battlefields. Seeing as how the updated Legends edition is being reviewed later in this issue, though, we'll just leave things here with a nod of acknowledgement to that Wii U debut. – **MATTHEW**



2015

THREE SWORDS ADVENTURE

FOLLOWING THE STRENGTH of that 2014 E3 showing, I think it's also safe to say that Nintendo's 2015's E3 showing was ... *not* one of their best, right? Outside of some series spin-offs, there were relatively few surprises and a distinct lack of a major, cool reveal like the previous year's Splatoon and Wii U Zelda. And speaking of which, Zelda had been hit by a delay by this point, so it was entirely absent from the show.

But fans of Link weren't entirely left in the cold, because one of the quirky spin-offs shown was an all-new 3DS title: Tri Force Heroes. The little space making it "Tri Force" instead of "Triforce" was no mistake, as it subtly described the hook of the game: Instead of a solo quest, Link would be joined by two other pals throughout the entire game. As a sort of spiritual successor to Four Swords, the game appeared to be a consolation prize of sorts for players who were champing at the bit for a new Hyrulian adventure in 2015.

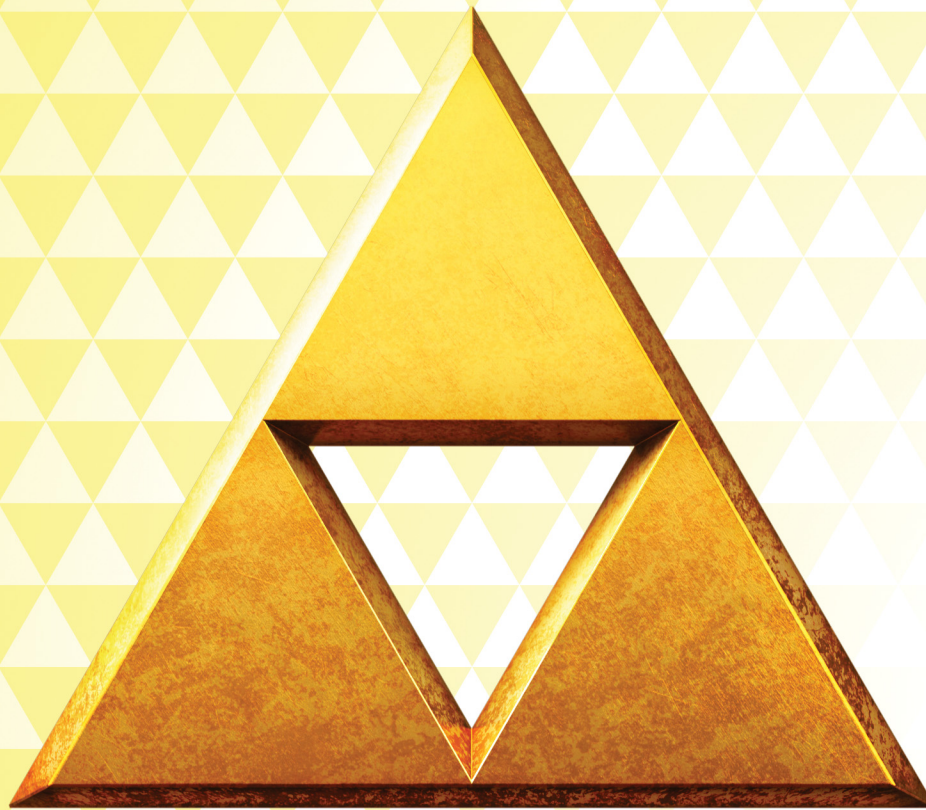
Personally, I was initially critical of the game – underwhelmed with the multiplayer-centric element. But Nintendo had an ace up their sleeve for skeptics like me: a fully playable demo with a bit of smart viral marketing. They distributed the demo, but only to a limited number of players. Those players, however, received three different demo codes, meaning they could keep one for themselves and share the other two with a couple friends. This led to a bit of a buzz on online message boards and social media for people looking to share or acquire demo codes with each other – a clever way to jump-start the game's communication element. Like Splatoon's Global Testfire, the demo was multiplayer-only and was activated only during a few specific windows of time.

And it was through that demo that I became a fan, because playing is believing with Tri Force Heroes. Despite some server errors during the playtest, the game ended up being a lot of fun, having enough of its own identity to set it apart from Four Swords. It definitely sold me on a game that I hadn't planned on buying.

One of the quirkiest elements of Tri Force Heroes was one that couldn't have been seen as a weakness: the limited communication system. The game lacks voice chat, but enterprising players can use the touchscreen to choose from a set of eight different images of Link expressing various emotions on his little face. It soon became abundantly clear that to work together with your two teammates, you'd have to utilize these tools well – it was almost a puzzle in itself! A nice side effect of this feature was that none of the emotions are of anger or grumpiness (the closest you'd get is a distressed-looking Link melodramatically crying "Nooo!"), which surprisingly keeps interactions very civil and friendly-feeling. Smart for a game that emphasizes working together!

All things considered, while Tri Force Heroes wasn't a traditional experience, it worked as a fun intermission between larger adventures, and a good way to whet our appetites for the beefier Zelda on the horizon. Grumble, grumble ... – **MATTHEW**





Today, and every day, it can often feel like our World is in an age of Chaos.

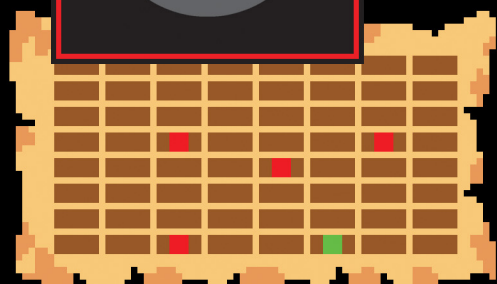
In the midst of this chaos, in the little kingdoms we build for ourselves in our homes, we can find comfort in the escapism of video games – these simple pieces of entertainment that seem to possess mystical powers, carrying us away from our worries so that we can go on incredible journeys in other Worlds . . . if only for a while.

For 30 years now, the greatest, most consistent, most steadfast and reliable games for instilling that sense of adventure in our hearts have been those bearing the name The Legend of Zelda. Now it's our responsibility to hand these adventures down, from generation to generation, so that even 30 years from now they'll still be as honored as they are today!





RETRO



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THE OLD MAN WE NEVER MET

BS ZELDA NO
DENSETSU
SUPER FAMICOM/
SATELLAVIEW, 1995

Here's a scene that should strike most of you as equal parts nostalgic and foreign. Clearly, this is the opening moment of The Legend of Zelda, in which the old man in a cave warns that "It's dangerous to go alone. Take this." And then Link takes the "this" that he's referring to: the series' first sword. Only that's not Link, is it? Nope, it's the backwards cap-wearing boy mascot of the Japan-only Satellaview hardware system, setting off on his quest through a 16-bit-styled remixed version of the original 8-bit Hyrule. As the Zelda series turns 30, this is one of the series' installments that fans in the West know the least about – so turn the page to learn more about the Satellaview hardware and the "BS Zeldas" we never got to play!

PERIPHERAL VISION SATELLAVIEW

Looking back on the Japan-exclusive Super Famicom add-on that let players download video games – including two different Zeldas – from outer space!

YOU'LL BE FORGIVEN If you've never heard of the BS-X Satellaview – of all the weird things Nintendo has released over the years, this device ranks pretty high on the "I can't believe this thing is real" scale. It has a funny name, it was only released in Japan and it played host to arguably the most obscure titles in Nintendo's history. It also enabled Nintendo to beam video games straight to gamers from outer space!

Nintendo may be the company most frequently criticized for its lack of vision regarding the Internet's relationship to video games, but back in 1995, they managed to make a fully functional satellite game-streaming service for the Super Famicom (i.e., the Japanese equivalent of the Super NES). Years before online gaming took the world by storm, the House of Mario partnered with St. GIGA, a Japanese satellite content provider, to release a device that allowed Nintendo to transmit actual game data directly to people's homes via satellite. Games and other content were broadcast intermittently – they were only available for download during a few specific times. (Think of what TV was like before the advent of DVR and you'll get the idea.)

Of course, this was the '90s, and rewritable media was far less common and affordable than it is today, so there were a few drawbacks. Most significantly, whenever a new game was downloaded, your old game was typically deleted thanks to the Super Famicom lacking its own hard drive and the Satellaview cartridge only possessing a meager 8 MB of memory. But technological limitations aside, there were some unique gaming experiences to be had. While some more traditional titles could be downloaded and played whenever you liked, special ones called SoundLink games were only playable during their broadcast hours. This is because the gameplay was accompanied by voice actors delivering story elements, objectives and other information live, as the game was played. The most notable of these were the BS (Broadcast Satellaview) Legend of Zelda games, but you can read more about those on the next page. Zelda aside, the Satellaview was home to a near-bottomless well of exotic titles that unfortunately – due to its aforementioned propensity to overwrite all but the last game played – exist only in the memories of those who originally played them. Some were eventually sold on cartridges, but the majority of releases weren't so lucky, leaving them lost in time.

The rest of the Satellaview library was absolutely fascinating and had something for just about everyone. If you were into the JRPG scene, there were some 16-bit remastered bits from the first Dragon Quest

and an original Fire Emblem side story. If you liked Mario games, there was a SoundLink version of Super Mario Bros. 2, and even some Mario-themed motocross. If you were a fan of F-Zero, there were a handful of broadcasts featuring new tracks and vehicles. For the Kirby aficionado, there was Special Tee Shot – which is the game that was eventually repurposed into Kirby's Dream Course, complete with unique graphic assets, music and courses. And then there was Kirby's Toy Box, a collection of 10 single-screen minigames – including a simplified version of Kirby's Pinball Land, a Breakout clone similar to Kirby's Block Ball and Cannonball, a game in which you control a giant mechanical hamster and shoot explosive Kirbys around. I couldn't make that up if I tried!

Another fun feature of the Satellaview was its built-in, not-quite-a-game menu interface called BS-X: The Story of The Town Whose Name Was Stolen. Bearing a passing visual resemblance to the EarthBound series, it consisted of a quirky little town where different buildings led to different games and applications. It even had its own story mode where you picked a boy or girl avatar and went on adventures. The whole experience was about as charming as you'd expect from Nintendo, right down to the satellite and satellite dish-shaped mascots, Satebo and Parabo.

The BS-X Satellaview is one of the last bastions of unexplored Nintendo history, and the games released for it are probably the most criminally underplayed of all time. Let's hope Nintendo feels the same way and brings them back to life someday, somehow! – KRIS



BS EXCITEBIKE: BUN BUN MARIO BATTLE STADIUM

Of all the intriguing games released only on the Satellaview, the most unexpected are its rather unusual sequels to earlier titles. First, there's BS Excitebike: Bun Bun Mario Battle Stadium. This title takes the gameplay of 1985's NES Excitebike and throws a touch of Mario Kart into the mix. Instead of the traditional racers, Mario and his friends ride around on classic Excitebike-style courses, but now there are coins, Koopa Troopas and voice samples from Mario Kart 64. There's almost no music, but the visuals are extremely well done with some excellent animation, vibrant colors and great still images. Mario Kart 8's DLC Excitebike map recaptured some of its spirit!



BS F-ZERO GRAND PRIX 2

Outside of Japan, F-Zero fans had to wait until F-Zero X on the N64 to revisit Captain Falcon's world of futuristic racing – but the Satellaview hosted an exclusive 16-bit sequel!

"...Do you still remember...?"

How we first met, and all of our adventures since...

It all seems like such a dream nowadays... You were a piece of a star that fell from the sky.

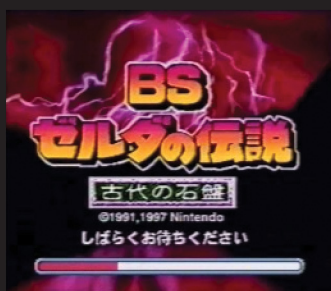


RADICAL DREAMERS

Believe it or not, this was actually a pseudo-sequel to the legendary Chrono Trigger. The game tells the story of Serge, Kid, Magil and Lynx, and how they relate to an artifact called the Frozen Flame. If this sounds familiar to you, that's because most of this game's story elements were repurposed for the 1999 PS1 release, Chrono Cross. This offshoot looks almost nothing like its inspiration, though, as it's a text adventure with very little in the way of actual in-game graphics. However, the music was composed by Yasunori Mitsuda, who was largely responsible for the Chrono Trigger soundtrack, and it's quite exceptional.



ORIGINAL RELEASE: BROADCAST OVER FOUR WEEKS IN AUGUST 1995 (MAP 1), THEN FOUR MORE WEEKS FROM LATE DECEMBER 1995 INTO JANUARY 1996 (MAP 2)
PUBLISHER: ST. GIGA
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO



ORIGINAL RELEASE: BROADCAST OVER FOUR WEEKS FROM LATE APRIL 1997 INTO MAY 1997
PUBLISHER: ST. GIGA
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

PLAYING THEM TODAY

The true experience of playing the Satellaview's two exclusive Zelda adventures is forever lost to time, as you simply had to have all the right equipment, live in Japan and be logged in during the exact one-hour intervals of their broadcasts to take part in the fleeting cultural event they were intended to be. But intrepid hobbyist programmers have preserved the code of both games and made them available through emulation for audiences outside Nintendo's home country – even translating their text into English and stitching together the originally separated chunks of content into single, connected quests with the strict time limits removed. A Google search will take you to them, or you can watch them played on YouTube!

THE UNLOCALIZED BS ZELDAS

Two decades ago, Nintendo fans living outside Japan missed out on a pair of totally unique Legend of Zelda experiences – and there's not much hope we'll ever get to play them (officially).

ONE OF THE core tenets of The Legend of Zelda is the search for and discovery of hidden treasure. While each game is filled with numerous moments of finding such valuables, it turns out that the franchise itself has a few hidden gems among its many titles as well!

Thanks to the Satellaview attachment for the Super Famicom, a variety of "Broadcast Satellaview" versions of games were released exclusively as downloadable titles for the 16-bit hardware in the mid- to late-'90s. Among the games available were a version of Excitebike featuring Mario and friends and a semi-sequel to Super Mario USA (a.k.a. Super Mario Bros. 2), but the most coveted of all would be the titles referred to collectively as the "BS Zelda" games.

The titles, BS Zelda no Denetsu (translated as BS The Legend of Zelda) and BS Zelda no Denetsu: Inishie no Sekiban (a.k.a. BS The Legend of Zelda: Ancient Stone Tablets), were released as four weekly episodes. Players had to be ready at a certain time or else risk missing out on the adventure, as a video game tip show was set to run concurrently through the satellite network.

Unlike most every other Zelda title out there, players did not take part in the adventure as Link, or even as Zelda. Rather, the Satellaview's boy and girl mascots were the selectable playable characters who would set out on their respective quests. Both also featured a narrator, as well as voice acting for the various cutscenes interspersed throughout.

Players were also restricted by the clock and a single hour of playtime, with two dungeons available to explore in each episode. Meanwhile, the clock would affect the gameplay of BS The Legend of Zelda by pausing the game for a moment every once in a while, so various sweeping changes could take effect – like the narrator chanting magic spells to stun or kill all the enemies on the screen, or granting unlimited use of normally limited items, such as bombs.

BS The Legend of Zelda: Ancient Stone Tablets was released in 1997 and served as a semi-sequel to A Link to the Past, borrowing many of its assets from the earlier release while tweaking the gameplay. Taking place six years after the fall of Ganon, peace in the land of Hyrule is threatened once again. But with Link away on other adventures (and the Triforce with him), a new hero is summoned to fulfill the prophecy.

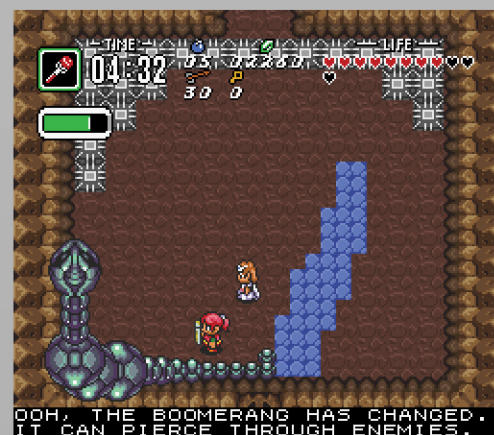
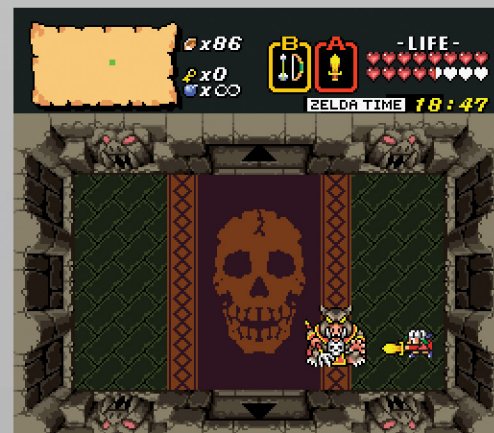
The overworld map is changed a bit as well, including the addition of item rental shops. While this idea predated Raviio by more than a decade, the amount of time allotted to renting an item was significantly less – only ten minutes!

While more A Link to the Past is always good,

you might arguably find BS The Legend of Zelda to be the greater curiosity of the two. As its simpler title suggests, the game is based on the original The Legend of Zelda for the Famicom/Nintendo Entertainment System, but it features a full 16-bit face-lift! Following the release of Super Mario All-Stars, Nintendo fans wondered what it would be like if the company did the same for Link's adventures. For the first, BS The Legend of Zelda provides the answer – aesthetically, at least.

In terms of story, BS The Legend of Zelda comes off as more of an alternate timeline tale in which the player (as, again, either the boy or girl Satellaview mascot) is summoned to aid Hyrule instead of Link. Of course, while there are many similarities, a bit of a twist lies at the end!

The time-sensitive nature and narration of these games has seemingly prevented Nintendo from a Western release, or even re-releasing them in Japan, though we can hope that the eShop could one day open up a new opportunity. Until then, however, there are . . . other ways to play them! – DAVID



OOH, THE BOOMERANG HAS CHANGED. IT CAN PIERCE THROUGH ENEMIES.

CHARACTER PROFILE

EPONA

She's been the Hero of Hyrule's steadfast steed ever since he took his first steps into the third dimension, and she'll be carrying him to certain victory yet again in the Zelda series' next sequel, scheduled to arrive later this year. Let's celebrate Epona, the queen of horses!



FIRST APPEARANCE
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (1998)

Epona leapt into action in style, by literally leaping her way out of the captivity of the evil Luigi look-alike, Ingo.



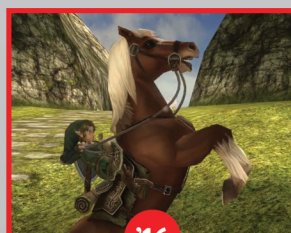
'98

She made her epic return to action in the next sequel, though, and Twilight Princess also introduced horseback combat!



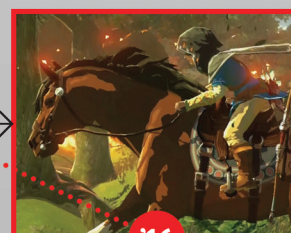
'06

But she's reliving her biggest triumph on Wii U now, too. Epic Epona action battling across the fields of Hyrule... in HD!



'16

Later this year, Epona will be back with a more important role than ever, thanks to the truly massive world of the next Zelda!



'16

HIGH POINTS

LOW POINTS



'00

Her next foe, though, got the better of her – Skull Kid horsenapped her in the opening moments of Majora's Mask.



'03

Things were even worse when water washed away Hyrule's land in The Wind Waker. Epona got replaced by a boat.



'15

Just last year, she was forced to relive one of her most painful memories. Horsenapped again... in 3D!



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
N64, 1998

The introduction of horseback riding was a major selling point for the Zelda series' first 3D quest, as the need for a steed emphasized just how huge the land of Hyrule had become. There was no way you'd be able to see it all just on Link's two feet!



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
GAMECUBE & Wii, 2006

Epona appears in the first few minutes of Twilight Princess' story, but it's only after a few hours into the tale that she truly shines – as you hop into her saddle to race after the villainous King Bulbin and have a head-to-head duel on the Bridge of Eldin.

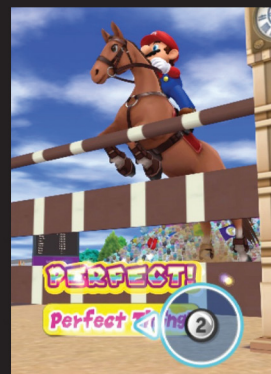


HYRULE WARRIORS & HYRULE WARRIORS LEGENDS
Wii U, 2014 & 3DS, 2016

The true mark of "having arrived" as a hero of Hyrule is being selected as a playable character in the new Hyrule Warriors games – and Epona has made that cut! Well, in a way – she's technically a "weapon" wielded by Link. But come on, let's be real – Link's not doing any of the work when she's on the field.

MEANT FOR MARIO

Odd as it may sound, Epona was originally in development not for *Ocarina of Time*, but for *Super Mario 64*! Having Mario ride a horse was one of the ideas that was considered for the plucky plumber's 3D debut, but he ultimately had to go alone through that entire adventure. He didn't even get to ride Yoshi! The work the team had already done on creating 3D horse-back riding was transferred to the in-progress "*Zelda 64*," and the rest is history. Perhaps this is another reason why Talon, the owner of Lon Lon Ranch, resembles Mario? (Mario himself finally did get to hop into the saddle a few years ago, in the 2012 London Olympics games.)



LINK'S FIRST STEED

Seeing Hyrule's hero hop on a horse was a truly novel sight to behold in 1998 – unless you'd already seen it happen a decade earlier in the *Legend of Zelda* cartoon series! There, Link was the owner of a fine young filly whom he'd named Catherine. She appeared in several episodes, helping Link charge off into battle against Ganon's forces. She even turned up in the pages of *Valiant Comics*, too!

WARP ZONE

What Nintendo Power was writing about way back when.

FOR THE FIRST time since its inception, Nintendo Power magazine hit what some might call a "dry spell" in early 1991 (which was bound to happen before long after its move from bi-monthly to monthly publication). That's not to say that the games available at this time were bad, but rather that they simply don't have the sort of longevity in peoples' minds that you would have expected from a typical NP cover story up to this point.

For March 1991's Issue #22, the cover announced the 12-page coverage of Metal Storm, a platforming game that put you behind the controls of a gravity-manipulating mech suit. Then 20 pages of StarTropics maps and strategies picked up where Issue #21 issue left off, prefaced by Howard and Nester having trouble getting Sub-C to submerge.

Master Higgins returned for eight pages of Adventure Island II, and the fight for freedom wherever there's trouble played out over 10 pages of G.I. Joe coverage, taking place during the notorious DiC Era. Rounding things out on the Nintendo Entertainment System was Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom, with Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and WWF WrestleMania spotlighted in the Now Playing section. Meanwhile, aliens abounded on Game Boy as foe and friend alike in Operation C and A Boy and His Blob in The Rescue of Princess Blobette.

A "Hardware Technical Article" opened up both the NES and the Game Boy, revealing a bit of how each system worked – from the CPU to the PPU and beyond. Plus, a peek at the actual 16-bit chip of the Super NES was shown at the end as the NP crew teased what the future would hold.



The Nesters made their triumphant return, and the competition for the annual awards was made even more fierce by the addition of Game Boy to the mix – including some titles from the previous year, as they weren't featured in the last round of awards. More immediately, the Top 30 was headlined once more by Super Mario Bros. 3, with Final Fantasy and Crystalis trailing behind; while Mario dominated the Game Boy Top 10 with Super Mario Land, chased by Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan.

Following a Celebrity Profile with Rain Pryor, Pak Watch took us into the future with looks at TaleSpin, Star Wars and Ufuria, which would not end up being released in North America until 2010 on the Wii's Virtual Console! Power Players were also taken to the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where the Super NES Showcase highlighted new 16-bit titles such as Actraiser, Gradius III and "Street Fighter" – which would eventually come to be known as Final Fight.

One other game featured in #22's Pak Watch wound up as Issue #23's cover story: Power Blade. A hefty 16 pages of strategies accompanied this blade-slinging adventure, which featured a makeover from the Mega Man-like protagonist it had in Japan to an Arnold-esque Hollywood-style action hero for the Western world. This was followed by six pages each of coverage for Totally Rad, Sword Master and a game called, well, S.C.A.T.

While Issue #22 was light on Portable Power, #23 made up for it with "more Game Boy reviews than ever," including R-Type, Ultima: The Runes of Virtue, Mickey's Dangerous Chase, WWF Superstars, Pac-Man and Caesar's Palace. Super Mario Land still reigned supreme over the likes of TMNT and The Final Fantasy Legend in the Game Boy Top 10, and though Super Mario Bros. 3's stranglehold on the Top 30 wasn't broken, its grasp was diminished by Mega Man 3 and TMNT II: The Arcade Game.

"The British Invasion" looked at English developers Rare, Software Creations, Ocean and Elite. Elsewhere, Howard tried to help Nester regain his lost memory, and the Player's Poll promised its winner a trip for four to a NASCAR race. Plus, Now Playing received an upgrade so as to give the likes of Double Dragon III and The Simpsons: Bart vs. the Space Mutants a bit more coverage. Finally, Pak Watch gave us a full page of Battletoads and teased Mega Man's fourth adventure possibly going 16-bit. Plus, we got a first glimpse at THQ (who'd apparently amassed a wealth of licenses before actually publishing any games at this point!) – DAVID

ISSUE #22: MARCH 1991



ISSUE #23: APRIL 1991



THE POSTERS OF NINTENDO POWER

When we set out on the adventure of carrying on Nintendo Power's legacy with the creation of NF Magazine, one aspect of its earliest era that we knew we'd have to bring back to life was its constant inclusion of fold-out wall posters in each new issue! The cover-to-cover coverage of every new and upcoming Nintendo game was spectacular all on its own, but it was that stapled-in, triple-tall poster that always put the experience of opening each new issue over the top. Oh yes, I said stapled in – many early NP issues didn't have a solid spine like NF does, but rather had all of their pages stapled together along the edge. That meant that the process for removing their posters was delicate, often maddeningly frustrating work – you had to carefully peel back each tiny tine of metal holding them in place, then slowly extract them bit by bit. If you failed? Your glorious wall art was marred by ripped gashes along its folds. (It was so much pressure for some of us '80s kids that we left many of the posters in place in the issues for fear of tearing!) For NF's packed-in posters, we decided against preserving that particular piece of nostalgia.



INTERVIEW

**DATE OF BIRTH**

The Year 199X

PLACE OF BIRTH

Arizona, USA

FAVORITE FOOD

Curry

LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS

Only female mosquitoes will bite you

UNIQUE AND INTERESTING PHOBIA

Doing interviews

CURRENT POSITION IN THE INDUSTRY

Translator

BEST KNOWN FOR

Officially translating anime like Dragon Ball and Attack on Titan, unofficially translating games like Bahamut Lagoon and Mother 3

CLYDE “TOMATO” MANDELIN

A legendary localization artist talks to us about *Legends of Localization* (his new book series that explores how Nintendo classics were translated from Japanese to English).

INTERVIEW BY JONATHAN HOLMES

NF: First up, who is Clyde Mandelin? Or should we say, "Tomato?"

CLYDE: I'm a professional translator who focuses on localizing Japanese entertainment into English, including movies, TV and games – but I primarily work on anime. Some of my anime projects include Dragon Ball, Attack on Titan, One Piece, Lupin III and Summer Wars. Game-wise, I've worked on projects like Kingdom Hearts II, The Nightmare Before Christmas and One Piece. I've been in this line of work for 14 years now.

I occasionally translate games as a hobby too – my past works include Mother 3, Bahamut Lagoon and Star Ocean. Online I'm most commonly known as "Tomato" or just "Mato."

What was your first localization project and why did you decide to take it on?

It's different for everyone, but as a professional translator I don't necessarily get to choose specific projects. Instead, my clients usually say, "Hey, we got this new project that needs doing," and then I get to work on it. I can pass on projects, of course, but then I won't earn any money and risk being left out of future projects. The first anime series I worked on was Dragon Ball, and the first game I worked on was The Nightmare Before Christmas for Game Boy Advance.

So even though you work in the industry as a professional, you still work on other, non-paid localization projects in your free time, just for fun. You even went as far as to write an entire book about how The Legend of Zelda was localized! What is it about the localization process that you find so fascinating?

I think it mostly stems from my enjoyment of taking things apart and seeing how they work. Digging into game localizations is always a lot of fun for me, and I enjoy being able to share my findings. Similarly, I enjoy peering into programming code and seeing how video games tick. I've always been like that, I guess.

I also enjoy sharing things from Japanese culture that friends and family wouldn't normally get to experience and appreciate. I think that's what drives a lot of people in this field, actually.

Also, as a translator there's a lot to the process that I see every day that's become ordinary and obvious for me that nobody else really gets to see. So it's always a treat to be able to share professional insights about the translation and localization process.

Did your research on the origins of the Zelda series cause you to see the franchise in new ways? They say that sausage never tastes quite the same after you learn how it's made . . .

I don't necessarily see the Zelda series in a new way, but I've absolutely gained a deeper appreciation for it, as well as an appreciation for the work that my industry predecessors did. We live in an interesting time – games and game localization have developed and matured in just a few decades, and we've been lucky enough to witness it. In contrast, traditional literature translation has been a thing for thousands of years, so this is a field that's still extremely new and fresh. It's exciting to be a part of it and to help document it!

For Zelda in particular, I feel that if you look at the localization of each game one after the other, it paints a great picture of how game localization in general has evolved over time. I look forward to sharing this picture in future books!

Out of all the Zelda games you've played, which do you feel have had the best and worst localizations?

I've only done detailed comparisons of a few Zelda games so far so I can't say much, but on a technical level Ocarina of Time seems very impressive to me. And as someone in the industry, I find A Link Between Worlds to be filled with lots of interesting localization challenges, such as the issue of continuity and trying to combine things from Nintendo's old localization style with Nintendo's modern localization style.

I don't think there's a "worst" localization in the series, but I feel that Zelda II's translation left the most room for improvement. A lot of care was put into other aspects of the game's localization, though, so a look at Zelda II's localization will be even more interesting than the first game's, without a doubt!

What's the most surprising thing you've discovered so far about the Zelda series?

Many Zelda games include cameos from totally unrelated games. Link's Awakening includes Goomba and Kirby enemies, for example, and there are even Super Mario Bros. cameos in Ocarina of Time.

I thought these cameos were just the developers getting sillier and sillier over time, but it turns out this has been a Zelda custom since the very first game! For example, the Digdogger enemies are meant to be

the same species of foe seen in 1985's Clu Clu Land, and the Manhandla bosses are actually meant to be four Piranha Plants from Super Mario Bros. joined together. Most gamers outside of Japan just never knew about these connections due to translation issues in the game's manual!

You were instrumental in the creation of the Mother 3 fan translation patch, which went on to inspire thousands of fans and game developers alike. What do you think of the current explosion of "Mother-likes" (Undertale, YIJK, Lisa: The Painful RPG, Citizens of Earth, Knuckle Sandwich, etc.) that have been created since your team's patch was released?

I don't feel that the fan translation had any real effect on these new games – the Mother games stand on their own. Fans were playing Mother 3 in Japanese long before the patch's release, and Shigesato Itoi and the series' staff deserve all the credit for making such an inspiring series.

I also feel that a lot of this inspiration comes from EarthBound. I believe the game was ahead of its time and

that it simply took a while for us to fully appreciate it. At the time of its release, EarthBound looked cartoony and bland compared to everything else, and the main advertising didn't do much to convince gamers otherwise. Plus it's important to remember that the gamers who *did* enjoy EarthBound in the '90s are grown up now and making their own games, so it's natural for that EarthBound influence to begin to appear. You see the same thing all the time in movies, books and even other games.

What do you think it is about the Mother/EarthBound series that has caused it to resonate in such a deep way with fans all over the world?

Oh man, you could probably write an entire book on the topic! I personally feel that the Mother games are so cherished because they have "heart." You can see it in every part of each game – every little thing is given a personal, unique touch.

For example, in Mother 3 you can chart the progress of every little NPC in the game. They have genuine personalities and quirks of their own – even the stray dogs.



•In order to read this sign, you had to trample on the flowers at your feet.

MOTHER 3'S FAN TRANSLATION

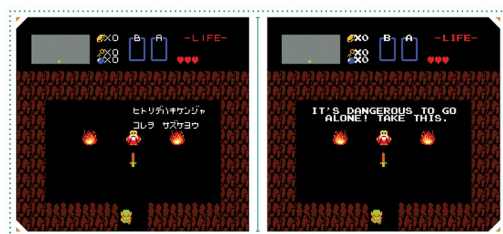
Clyde's most famous contribution to the Nintendo fandom began nearly 10 years ago, when he stepped forward to take charge of the EarthBound fan community's effort to translate Mother 3 into English – because Nintendo wasn't going to do it themselves. Clyde assembled a dedicated team of programmers, artists and fellow translators with experience in game localization, and work began in late 2006. Nearly two years later – after thousands of hours of work from dozens of people – the Mother 3 Fan Translation was released as a patch in October 2008. Instantly, the salivating fans who'd been waiting to play the game in readable form downloaded it in droves, with over 100,000 downloads logged in just the first week alone! It was well-earned success for an undertaking that had been for all intents and purposes a second full-time job for Clyde, and we'll dig deeper into all of the hurdles that he and his team had to overcome to make it all happen in our next issue. But perhaps more immediately timely to mention is the fact that the Mother 3 Fan Translation was accompanied by the release of the Mother 3 Handbook, a lovingly crafted, art-packed strategy guide from Fangamer – the same company that Clyde has now just partnered with again to create the Legends of Localization book series.



LEGENDS OF LOCALIZATION

Since you're reading this, you're clearly a fan of reading coverage of Nintendo games in magazine form – so it shouldn't be too much of a leap for you to appreciate Clyde's incredible new, fully illustrated and immensely insightful book called *Legends of Localization, Book 1: The Legend of Zelda*. In it, Clyde taps into both his professional experience as a translator and his passion as a fan of the *Zelda* series and digs into all of the differences that exist between the Japanese and English versions of the first Legend of *Zelda* game. It's a fascinating read, and one that will make you appreciate all of the behind-the-scenes effort that goes into bringing games to the Western world. And if you like what you see in it, you're in luck, because Clyde's planned a whole series of follow-up books – the next one will take on *EarthBound*!

HELPFUL SWORD GUY



The first person you meet in *Zelda* is an iconic old man in a cave who gives you a sword. In English he says, "It's dangerous to go alone! Take this."

He says pretty much the same thing in Japanese: "It's dangerous to go alone. I'll give you this." He also says it with an "old wise man" speech style that isn't reflected in the English translation.

You'll also notice that the text is positioned differently in the Japanese game – it starts printing right above the man's head. It does this with all the other text in the game, too. This text formatting was probably meant to act like a speech bubble in a comic, only without a bubble.

Since it usually takes a lot more text to convey things in English, though, text in the NES version often takes up *all* of the blank space above characters' heads. The vertical spacing was also changed to allow for three lines of English text in some rare cases. I personally find the English style a lot more aesthetically pleasing, although I can appreciate what the Japanese version was going for.

HEART CONTAINERS



It turns out what I had always known as a "Heart Container" was actually called a "Container Heart" in both the Japanese and the NES release of the game! It seems my confusion stems from the fact that it was called a "Heart container" in the manual. The game and the manual are pretty inconsistent like this, as we'll continue to see.



Incidentally, the Japanese name for this item literally translates to "Life Container" or "Container of Life" rather than "Container Heart".

In *EarthBound*, you – the actual person holding the controller – become a part of the game.

In *EarthBound Beginnings*, you win the game with unconditional love, not with overwhelming power.

The games are also "different" from other games – they weren't even designed by an actual game designer! It's common to see game designers trying too hard to be funny and forcing wackiness. But the *Mother* games rarely ever try too hard in these respects. Their charm is natural and stems from the staff's real life experiences. That's what makes the *Mother* games shine.

Have you ever considered working at Nintendo? What would be the pros and cons of crossing over from being a fan to becoming a member of the Treehouse?

I've applied twice, actually. Once when I was right out of college and definitely not ready. The other time was many years later, on a lark – a friend of mine who worked there offered to recommend me for an opening, so I decided to give it a shot. I got far into the process and even talked with Bill Trinen in Japanese about *Mother 3*; it was surreal. I enjoy the independence and freedom of being a freelancer/contractor though, so I'm happy with my current position.

As someone who's on both the fan side and the professional side of localization, the biggest plus is being able to say, "Holy crap, I'm actually a part of this game's staff now!" and then pouring all of that passion into the project. The biggest downside is that professional work introduces a lot of bureaucratic red tape. Things like deadlines and paperwork take some of the fun out of it too. Both sides are still a lot of fun, though, and offer their own unique perspectives.

As of this writing, Nintendo still hasn't brought Mother 3 out of Japan, despite having an established audience clamoring for the game on a daily basis. As someone who knows Mother 3 inside and out, what do you think it is about the game that's prevented Nintendo from releasing it in the West?

I believe it's entirely an issue of money and manpower. I have no doubt everyone at every branch of Nintendo would *love* a translated *Mother 3* release – it's just a matter of resources. It takes a surprising amount of time, money and work to localize a game, and it's in Nintendo's best interest to make sure that all

resources are being invested on the most profitable projects at all times.

Any advice for fans who might want to work in professional game localization?

Game localization is more than just translating, but if you want to focus on the translation side, then I highly recommend taking a few semesters of Japanese at a university, then studying in Japan for a while. The basics can be learned anywhere, but after that you'll gain a huge boost by being in Japan and soaking in all the more advanced stuff.

You don't need to know Japanese to be a part of the localization process though. Study to be a writer, editor, programmer or manager, for example – these are all just as essential to a localization team. The catch is that jobs like these are often a "you gotta be at the right place at the right time" sort of thing, but it's important to put yourself into that place to begin with. So study, practice and start building your portfolio!

If you could work on the official localization of any other Nintendo title that hasn't yet made it out of Japan (Captain Rainbow, Daigasso! Band Brothers P, GIFTPIA, Ripened Tingle's Balloon Trip of Love, Chibi-Robo! Happy Rich Big Sweep!, Tomato Adventure, etc.) which would you choose and why?

I actually really, really want to localize the *StarTropics* games into Japanese as a hobby project someday. I was a huge fan of the series and was sad when I learned that they were never released in Japan. I also think it'd be a fun challenge, and maybe one I could document!

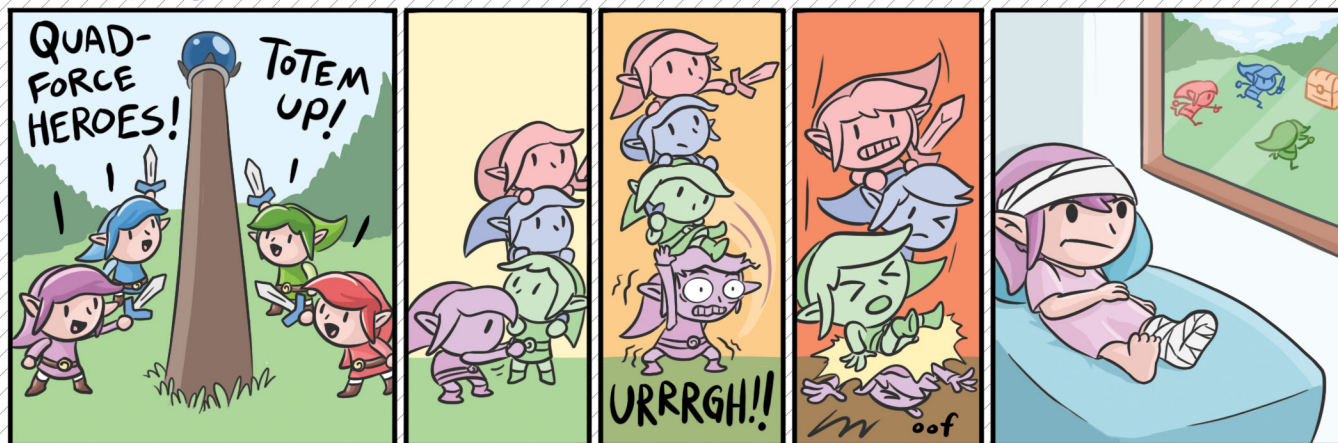
I've started to get into streaming Japanese-only games and translating them live. I've recently begun to live-translate *Tomato Adventure*, the spiritual predecessor of the *Mario & Luigi* games, and it's been so much fun! I'd love to do a full translation of it someday, but it'd end up being just as large of a project as *Mother 3*. For now, I'm content with live-translating overlooked gems like these.

Finally, if you could have any super power, what would it be and why?

I'd like the power to be able to do more in a day. I'd also like the power to see every potential outcome for every choice I encounter – that might be overwhelming after a while, though. So maybe the power to understand any language would be the coolest choice!

TRI-FORCE TRI-LOGY

"PURPLE LINK"



"ZORA COSTUME"



"TOTEM"





REVIEWS



It's 30 years of The Legend of Zelda celebrated in a single game!
Turn the page for our full review of Hyrule Warriors Legends!



The Gang's All Here

HYRULE WARRIORS LEGENDS

AH, HYRULE WARRIORS – one of the greatest games to ever hit the Wii U, in my humble opinion. With a flair of Warriors action that can't be topped by any other game, you move across the playing field in quick and swift succession. It helps that the game is backed up by characters and environments from the Legend of Zelda franchise, which brings the entire package together. While I was harsher on the game when it was initially released, I grew to love it more the more I played it. It has a crazy amount of content, fun characters and an over-the-top story that I truly appreciate.

Now those memories have returned with Hyrule Warriors Legends, a 3DS reimagining of the beloved Wii U game... but was that actually a good idea? The handheld doesn't have the power to be on par with the Wii U, and Koei Tecmo hasn't done particularly great work on portables recently. So joyful but cautious, I threw the tiny cartridge into various different 3DS systems and explored how this new version has handled the handheld transition.

It didn't fare well. Not on the older members of "the 3DS family of systems," at least – if you have a regular model Nintendo 3DS, a 3DS XL or a 2DS, I can't recommend Hyrule Warriors Legends to you. The game only functions the way it's supposed to when you're playing on either a New Nintendo 3DS or New 3DS XL system. That might sound harsh, but the game will run below acceptable standards if you try to play it on the systems with

less horsepower. Is it completely unplayable? Certainly not, but from personal experience, it feels like you have to make a lot of compromises. The game slows down constantly, which makes it feel shaky – and the gameplay becomes kind of sloppy. There's also a lot more pop-in to deal with, and the 3D option is completely disabled. While there's still some slight slowdown and pop-in on the New 3DS systems, it happens way less.

With less slowdown and frustration, the controls feel just as responsive as the original game on Wii U. There are simple combo attacks that require two buttons, and you'll be using that variety of attacks to destroy everything in your path. That may sound like simple hack-and-slash fare to the newcomer, but there's so much depth in Hyrule Warriors Legends. The enemies start slow, but along the way, you'll meet gradually harsher and more capable foes. There are objectives that you have to complete, like conquering keeps and outposts or destroying a slew of enemies to create a clear passageway for your allies. It constantly keeps you engaged.

The developers saw fit to make changes based around the idea of playing it on a handheld. Obviously, you'll look at the touchscreen to see the map of the stage and know where you stand in the battle – but it doesn't take long to notice that there's more to it, because there are multiple characters with dedicated buttons on there as well. Yes, a big change in Legends is that you can switch characters on the fly, playing as several different heroes during a single mission. That sounds like a way to force you to jump all over

the place, but there's value there – especially if you already played these missions on Wii U in 2014. Being able to hop around between heroes gives a fresh feeling to familiar battles.

If that isn't enough, there are now also Owl Statues, for when you're playing as a lone hero in a select few missions. You'll have to activate them first, but once you do they'll serve as warp points for the remainder of that battle, letting you use the newly added Ocarina item to quickly zip yourself back to them (and cutting down on the number of times you have to just run back across an empty battlefield to retrace your steps).

While the fundamentals have been shaken up a bit, I find it personally more impressive just how much they've have added, content-wise. The Legends Mode is a great example of this – not only do you get all of the original story missions from the Wii U version, but the extra Cia missions are there as well. Two dozen missions may sound like a solid foundation, but the developers kept adding extra stuff to this game. There are missions with the new character Linkle, which tell a story that happens at the same time as the main tale – and *another* set of new missions that takes you to the world of The Wind Waker, bringing new environments and characters to the Hyrule Warriors story.

That might sound fun already, but the well-known Adventure Mode makes a return as well. With a huge selection of missions, you'll have to uncover what's hidden behind each



THE Wii U TRANSFER

If you purchase Hyrule Warriors Legends either physically or digitally, you'll receive an extra download code – but before you can use it, you'll need to install the latest game update, which will contain the data for something special! Your code is revealed to be a key that will enable you to play with the newcomers from Hyrule Warriors Legends back on the Wii U version of Hyrule Warriors! None of the new missions carry over and you're limited in what you unlock for each character, but you will see your new friends Linkle, Skull Kid, Toon Link, Tetra and the King of Hyrule in glorious high definition. Next to that, they can all be leveled up like usual, so you'll be able to quickly build up forces to be reckoned with. You'll be able to use the characters in the Free Play and Adventure modes, so there are plenty of opportunities to try out all their moves. Time to get back to where you left off on the Wii U!

**3DS PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: OMEGA FORCE &
TEAM NINJA**



tile on the 8-bit maps. Every tile has unique rewards like additional weapons or playable characters, which will heavily extend the playing time and your enjoyment. While it helps to know the proper moves – because there's no help here – this mode is perfect when played a few minutes at a time, here and there. You can easily knock down 400 enemies, smile for a bit and put that New Nintendo 3DS right back into your pocket. The objectives are varied, new roadblocks are constantly introduced and you're truly challenged as a player.

The Free Play mode completes the trifecta of content quite perfectly. It's here that you can replay any Legends mission you've already completed, taking it on again without any restraints or restrictions. You're free to choose the characters you want to work with and any weapon that you have unlocked can be chosen. This creates brand-new ways to clear stages, and give the whole cast a chance to shine in any scenario.

Sadly, there are no multiplayer options in the game, which is a big bummer – it would have been great to team up with a buddy and help each other in the missions! It could have made the loot collecting aspect a lot

more fun, but you can't have everything I suppose. Perhaps in Hyrule Warriors 2, if Nintendo and Koei Tecmo decide to extend this partnership into the future?

At the end of the day though, I did really enjoy what Hyrule Warriors Legends has on offer. If you only have access to an older 3DS model, it's really a hard sell – except if you have incredible patience. But when the game gets plugged into a New Nintendo 3DS or a New 3DS XL, it's a match made in heaven. There are some missteps and annoyances, but nothing truly stopped me from playing for hours on end. That is the staying power of a truly good Warriors game!

– DAAN



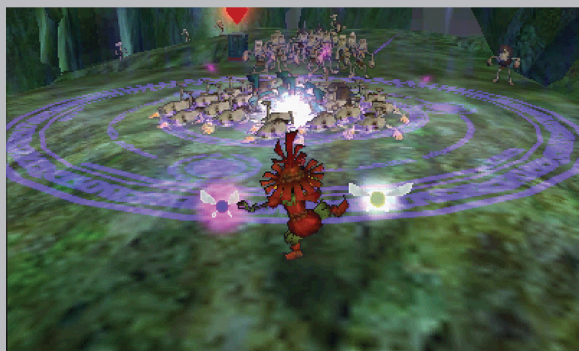
THE “FEMALE LINK”

Out of all of the newly included characters, Linkle is the one who truly plays like a dream. Just like Lana from the original Wii U release of Hyrule Warriors in 2014, Linkle is an all-new, totally original character created by Omega Force and Team Ninja that never previously appeared in an older Legend of Zelda game. In fact, the developers crafted some concept art for what a “female Link” would look like while work was underway for the Wii U Hyrule Warriors, but they decided against pursuing the idea further for some reason – so Linkle ended up on the cutting room floor two years ago. But her story didn't end there!

An artbook was released alongside the Wii U version, and within its pages appeared some of that “female Link” concept art. Fans loved the idea of Linkle – and they let the developers know it! Thanks to that outpouring of support for a simple piece of art, Linkle was brought back out of the wastebin and fully developed to make her debut in this

Nintendo 3DS re-release. Linkle feels like the fastest runner in the game, which is more needed than you might think. In the missions that revolve around Linkle, you'll mostly play solely as her, so getting used to the way she acts is important. Her attacks are also rather special in the sense that she make use of two crossbows. These mighty weapons will fling bolts in many directions to secure clean and quick victories. With every tap of the Y Button, her attacks become stronger – and she ends her combos with a powerful slam. Her whole moveset is incredibly effective and satisfying! We haven't touched upon the best part yet however: When you press and hold X, Linkle will collect all of her enemies into a gigantic ball, which slowly decreases their energy. It looks silly and over-the-top, but it's crazy effective at the same time! It makes crowd control a breeze and can help you to get out of some nasty trouble. Linkle gives the instant joy that you want out of a Warriors character. It seems crazy that her playstyle wasn't used by another character before. The crossbows are a true game changer!





THE CLOCK TOWN TRICKSTER

The true star of The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask is here to join the party, and we couldn't be more excited to have him. Skull Kid is an intriguing and sinister character that mostly acted on his evil mask's behalf in his game. In Hyrule Warriors Legends, those rules have been reversed, however, as Skull Kid mostly uses his own strength to get a head start in the battles he enters. His fairy friends Tat! and Tael aid him in each fight, flying through the air to create some quick slices to swiftly end their opponents' lives. And while the fairies' aerial assaults feel fast and instantly gratifying, nothing comes close to the fun of witnessing Skull Kid's energy-based attacks. He can perform an uppercut that hits enemies from an unique angle that barely any other character uses. The enemies really don't know what hit them! And that's what this jokester loves to see. His other energy attack spreads out a lot more and hurts enemies at ground level, at first – then they'll fly into the air before they can say "whoops" and will make quite a smack on their way down. While that's all amazing and hilarious, it must be said that the actual movement speed of Skull Kid seems to be on the slower side. There's nothing wrong with that in theory, considering you have Ganondorf as an even more lumbering option – but somehow it feels slightly off for such a small forest kid to feel so weighty. On the flipside, I think the best thing about Skull Kid is his special attack. A miniature angry moon pops up out of nowhere, and he holds it up high with his feet. After that, he shoots the moon directly at his opponents, which makes him look like an overpowered soccer/football player. You can't help but shout GOOOOOOOOAAAAL when you see that!



THE CEL-SHADED SAILOR

Toon Link from The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker didn't seem like a logical choice to join the playable cast at first. There are plenty of Link variations in the game already, after all – including the various costumes that Adult Link has – so we were certainly not expecting that Toon Link would make an appearance. Does that make it a bad surprise? Absolutely not, because this beloved Link version has some neat, unique things going for him. At first glance, you might not see anything special – Toon Link seems to move along at a moderate pace, and his attacks seem similar to those of the grown-up Link. Then you start slowly seeing the differences that matter. A good example is how Toon Link uses more sideways slices in his moves, which makes him spin his sword around slightly more. That seems unimportant, but more enemies will get hit by the radius of those attacks, and that makes for a greater sense of control. Next to this, he seems to jump more between moves, and that creates unique opportunities for combos – one of them sees Toon Link thrusting his sword downward in an attempt to spike the enemies beneath him. The crazy part about that is it fits the bill perfectly! It's a move that excites you when you first try it and brings more flair to Toon Link's combat overall. The best thing is, however, his usage of the Deku Leaf. The item, which was featured mostly as a way to float through the air in The Wind Waker, becomes an important way to attack here. When you're in the air, you swipe the leaf around to gust-attack huge arrays of enemies. (Not only does this knock smaller enemies out instantly, but it just looks insanely cool.) Toon Link ignores the laws of physics, but he causes lot of smiles!





THE PIRATE PRINCESS

Getting the chance to step into the boots of Tetra from *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* is one of the highlights of playing the new *Hyrule Warriors Legends*! While most of the characters limit themselves to a single weapon type, Tetra wields both a sword and gun. That may not seem like it's logical to you, but it creates some of the most memorable combos we had the pleasure of witnessing in the entire game! She quickly shoots around with her gun to hit any enemies that might be further away.

This flintlock pistol will not only deal a hefty amount of damage, but the opponent will also get knocked back. This is perfect for creating open passageways through crowds of foes, so that you can continue your missions quickly without necessarily having to kill every enemy standing between you and your objective. The slices of her sword are equally impressive, as she moves around with it in random ways. That might not be so helpful against easier foes, but when you're focusing on a boss, it becomes so critically important. That fact alone makes her suited for almost any given level, even if the elements don't match. Her attacks are quickly paced and all give you the instant satisfaction that you'd want. She runs fast too, so getting somewhere always feels like a breeze. Talking about her elements,

Tetra will shoot water bullets from time to time, which will engulf her enemies from beneath. Those are the only part of her moveset that I didn't think were extremely useful, though – it takes too long to see the true effect of the attack, and by the time that happens, you'll want to have already moved on to your next set of enemies. Finally, while her ultimate special attack is incredibly effective damage-wise, it sadly isn't anything too flashy to behold: Tetra spins around, attacks with both her weapons and throws the enemy away with a splash of water. We would have hoped for something grander, but, alas, those hopes were washed away.



HALF MAN, HALF BOAT

The King of Hyrule – also known as the King of Red Lions or, rarely, by his full name Daphnes Nohansen Hyrule – is a rather unique inclusion for *Hyrule Warriors Legends*. The King barely appears in his own game of *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, so it's fun to see his actual human form take center stage. Unlike most characters in *Hyrule Warriors*, the King of Hyrule is a slow and bulky character who takes a while to get used to. I would go as far as stating that he's the slowest character in the game up until this point, so learning all of his additional techniques is top priority.

(But you might not care about that and simply want to know what his moves are actually like.) On his back, he actually carries the full-size sail from his boat alter ego – with it, he slashes away at anyone who stands in his way. These attacks are powerful, even beyond expectations, and he actually becomes faster while swinging the sail around. He will spin around the sail to spike down on enemies, or slam the sail downward to flatten the evil masterminds everywhere. At certain points, he will transform into the boat, which makes way for more unique attacks. If you press a certain combo correctly, water will suddenly appear and the boat will make a full 360-degree spin! With an additional laugh of the King, it all comes together and it creates moments that are quite magical (and comical). It becomes even more entertaining when you activate his special attack, in which the boat directly charges toward the enemy. It's certainly silly to see it all transpire, but that makes it all the more fun! Out of the five newcomers, the King will probably end up being the one who's used the least – players may skip learning his watery ways because he's not as well known or immediately engaging as the other new arrivals. But investing time in King Daphnes is totally worth the effort in the long run. He's a powerhouse who shouldn't be skipped!





Return to the Realm of Twilight

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS HD

DO YOU REMEMBER the excitement that hit us all when *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* was first unveiled? (If you're old enough to remember it?) It was a very unique time for Zelda fans. Nowadays, *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* is looked upon almost unanimously as a wonderful Zelda game from top to bottom. Back then, *Wind Waker* was shunned by many due to its visual stylings. That largely negative response is what helped to steer Nintendo toward the more traditional, realistic and darker style that *Twilight Princess* took on. The very first reveal trailer for *Twilight Princess* was an absolute gift to those who had been saddened by *Wind Waker*'s cartoonish style. Link was back! And he was returning in adult form, looking more serious than ever before.

Little did we know just how long we'd be waiting to get our hands on the finished version of *Twilight Princess*. Delays on *Legend of Zelda* games aren't something that's unexpected, but the delay on *Twilight Princess* was extremely brutal. The game was pushed back multiple times, with fans left wondering what was going on. There were even shirts being sold in stores like Hot Topic that featured references to just how torturous the wait for *Twilight Princess* was! We eventually came to find out that the game had been pushed back to become a dual release on the GameCube and Nintendo's then up-and-coming home console, the Wii. That's how *Twilight Princess* ended up

closing the door on the Cube generation and ushering in an all-new era of motion controls.

Believe it or not, that release happened over nine years ago now! It seems like *Twilight Princess* rolled out just yesterday, but we've come through almost two full generations of systems since the title first hit store shelves. Now we're living in a time chock-full of HD remakes and re-releases, and it seems Nintendo has taken a real shine to revamping various *Zelda* titles to follow this trend. *Wind Waker* got a real overhaul on the Wii U, and now the GameCube's second mainline *Zelda* game has gotten the re-release treatment. Now those who missed out on *Twilight Princess* the first time around can jump into a visually and mechanically tweaked version, or those who enjoyed the title the first time around can relive the memories in higher resolution. The question is, is this re-release worthy of your time, or is it just acting as a stop-gap from here until *Zelda Wii U* hits later this year?

There's one thing that everyone can agree on with *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess HD*: At its very core, this Wii U re-release offers up the same wonderful gameplay and storyline that the original title brought us. There haven't been any cuts or edits to the experience of *Twilight Princess* on the Wii/GameCube. Sure, there are some tweaks here and there that help with the flow of the game – but there's nothing missing when you look at the grand scheme of things. If you really enjoyed what *Twilight Princess* offered the first time around, there's no reason to think that you wouldn't also get those same happy vibes from

double-dipping. That said, there are still some new ideas at play that might convince a previous owner to look into picking this game up.

One of the biggest changes comes from the method of control, which was already something hotly debated among *Twilight Princess* fans. While the GameCube release offered standard button controls and the Wii version had motion controls, *Twilight Princess HD* includes a combination of both with even more bells and whistles, thanks to the GamePad's abilities. You're able to use the gyroscopic nature of the GamePad to aim items like the Gale Boomerang, Slingshot and more by using 1:1 movements, which can be used in conjunction with traditional joystick movement to help fine-tune your aiming. You also get the GamePad touchscreen for item management on

the fly, and also map navigation. While the motion controls might not be for everyone and are completely optional, there's no denying that the touchscreen item management and map usage are head and shoulders above what the GameCube and Wii versions offered.

Next up on the list comes the visual revamp. *Wind Waker HD* took the unique cartoon style that we saw on the GameCube and really made it pop. There's no denying that the HD treatment really made *Wind Waker* sing in a way that the GameCube never could. When it comes to *Twilight Princess HD*, the visual tweaks may not seem as eye-popping – but when you look at the HD version side-by-side with its GameCube or Wii predecessors, there's simply no comparison. The game has become a lot less muddy and blurry, with the textures getting a



AMIIBO FUNCTIONALITY

It's been fairly well promoted that the packed-in Wolf Link & Midna amiibo figure opens up access to a new in-game challenge area called the Cave of Shadows, but less well known is that tapping the figure on the game's title screen can also quick-load your save data! It only saves you from a few seconds of menu navigation, but it's still a pretty snazzy way to leap back into the adventure after you've been away for a while.

Wii U PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPERS: NINTENDO & TANTALUS



complete redraw, making for a much clearer and sharper experience.

If you're playing *Twilight Princess* HD without looking back at the original releases, you might not be that wowed – it's a bit of a rose-tinted glasses situation. *Twilight Princess* HD may look just as you remember it on its original platforms, but actually comparing the source material will show you just how nicely things have been redone for the Wii U release.

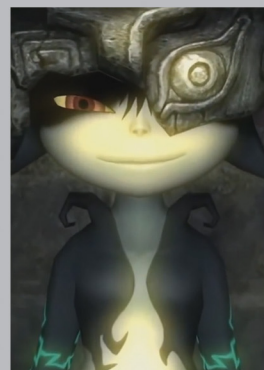
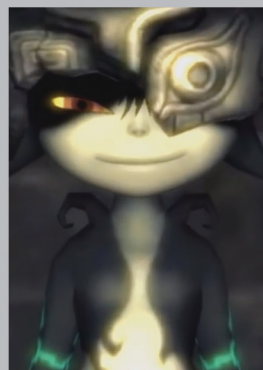
There's also a handful of other new goodies thrown into the mix along the way, most notable of which is the Wolf Link amiibo. The amiibo itself is absolutely outstanding, making for a must-have spot in any amiibo fan's collection. Its actual in-game usage unlocks the Cave of Shadows, a trial cave where you fight through level after level using only Wolf Link's abilities. It's certainly a nice addition, but not anything mind-boggling. You can also use other *Zelda*-related amiibo in-game to get items like hearts and arrows, or even to make the game more challenging.

Aside from the amiibo compatibility, there are also new treasure chests that include special Miiverse stamps, a collectible obviously not found in the GameCube or Wii versions. A new Ghost Lantern is also tucked away in the game for you, which will make your Poe-hunting much easier to tackle.

Lastly, a few gameplay mechanics have been slightly changed to make for a better overall experience, like truncated Tears of Light hunts, faster load times and even quicker climbing speeds. Again, none of these elements on its own is amazing, but added together they make for a nice bump over the originals.

If you've never played *Twilight Princess*, this is pretty much a required purchase – it's a shining example of how fantastic the *Legend of Zelda* series can be. If you did happen to play the originals, you'll have to weigh the decision of this purchase a bit differently. Does the new content, tweaks to existing content and a Wolf Link amiibo justify a \$60 pricetag for you? It's certainly not an easy decision!

– KEVIN C.



A VISUAL COMPARISON

Old 2006 version on the left, new 2016 HD Wii U version on the right.

Can you tell the difference? Well, maybe or maybe not – the print magazine medium may not be the best suited for conveying these specific visual upgrades in a manner that does them justice. But you can seek out any of a number of comparison videos online – even officially produced by Nintendo – to get a better, in-motion head-to-head. Or you can simply take our word for it! *Twilight Princess* HD isn't the totally remodeled overhaul that *Ocarina of Time*, *Majora's Mask* or *The Wind Waker* have received for their re-releases, as the geometry of its characters and environments are the same as they were a decade ago – but everything's much crisper and cleaner, with new textures that are almost always an improvement over the old versions. It looks great!



9.0



7.5



Life of a Prince

RETURN TO POPOLOCROIS: A STORY OF SEASONS FAIRYTALE

FOR THOSE OF you still on the fence about this title: This is *not* the next title in the Story of Seasons franchise. Rather, it's a reboot of a classic JRPG series that has had a grand total of one game appear in English, and it borrows the relationship and farming elements of the Story of Seasons franchise. Return to Popolocrois could stand alone without its "A Story of Seasons Fairytale" subtitle, but since Marvelous was a co-developer, there it is. Its borrowed elements are sometimes lacking, but the story, characters and combat make for a stroll down the garden path that's far from ordinary.

All Prince Pietro wanted to do was celebrate his 13th birthday with his family and friends – especially his sweetheart, Narcia. A mysterious visitor to the Popolocrois royal court, the beautiful Marmela, takes advantage of Pietro's helpful and trusting nature, sending him on a one-way trip to far-off Galariland while Popolocrois is ravaged by the same black beasts that have laid waste to that distant kingdom. However, Pietro's not alone, as he's joined by a cast of helpful char-

acters, both new and . . . new? It's the first time a lot of us will be meeting the people of Popolocrois Story, which is a much beloved media franchise in Japan. While there's a brief "getting to know you" prologue to Return to Popolocrois, it doesn't offer much in terms of backstory for each of the main characters. (XSEED is helping us out in that regard; see the information about the manga below.)

In Galariland, Pietro's goal is to revive the singing goddess Galariel of Light by restoring the life to four season-themed farms scattered across the countryside. In order to do so, the fairy Connie (who says "Mister Hero!" instead of "Hey! Listen!") shrinks Pietro and his allies down to the size of ants in order to let them travel inside vegetable plots and weed out the black beasts contaminating them. While the field dungeons certainly look beautiful (especially the towering vines and flowers), their layout is bland and tasteless. (Whoever designed them must *really* love right angles.) Even the obligatory ancient ruins that have to be traversed suffer in the same way, and are even palette swaps of each other.

As for combat, the system allows

characters and enemies to move in a set range before attacking or using a magic spell, which can either be single-, multi- or area-targeted. The developers thoughtfully included an option to skip battle animations, which can get pretty lengthy. You're also able to trigger auto battles, and can adjust the difficulty and encounter rate outside of battle in the configuration menu, which is great if you're item farming for one of the myriad fetchquests the people of Galariland will send you on. Boss battles usually came with a major difficulty spike that required me to strategize, but most of the time I just had my characters surround an enemy and have at it – a little boring, actually.

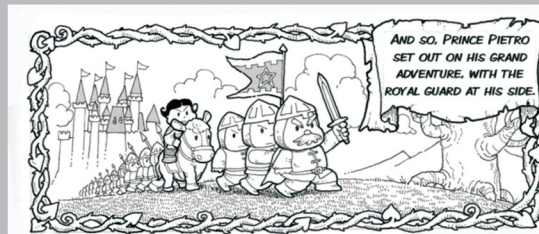
Now on to when Pietro goes from Prince Charming to Prince Farming. The farming system is a simplified version of what's used in Story of Seasons – crops are constantly growing as you play, with your next chore a sprinkle of fairy dust away (the fast travel system, probably the best feature in the game). You'll never have to worry about inclement weather, sick animals or damaging your harvest with an errant swing of a tool, and seeds are plentiful as loot drops – you'll likely never have to buy any. The livestock – sumoo, cuckotti and pacapacas (I'll let you figure out what their real world analogues are) – are also just as low maintenance. The

only downside to farming is the fact that it's awkward to maneuver to a specific square, as the camera swivels from the diagonal perspective used for the rest of the action to the top-down perspective that's found in the Harvest Moon/Story of Seasons games, which forces you to make your Circle Pad or D-Pad movements a little more precise. Crops can be shipped or synthesized, and the synthesis function comes with a lot of room to experiment, producing food as well as weapons and armor.

The other major mechanic of the Story of Seasons series does not make as smooth a transition to Galariland. Instead of courting and marrying eligible marriage partners, Pietro can only befriend young women who have received Galariel's personal blessing. They'll affect your farm's production in various ways when their friendship level is high enough to come for a visit. Giving gifts and having a chat are the only methods to develop their relationships, but you can only give them cooked food or crops – you can't even give Emilia her favorite gems and metals or Lily her favorite bugs! (And the only gift Narcia ever gets from Pietro? A peck on the forehead.)

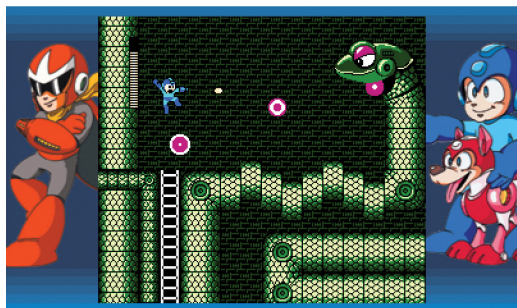
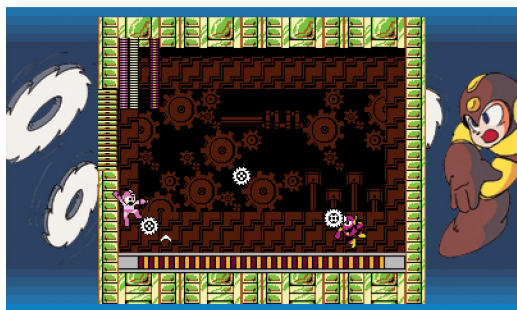
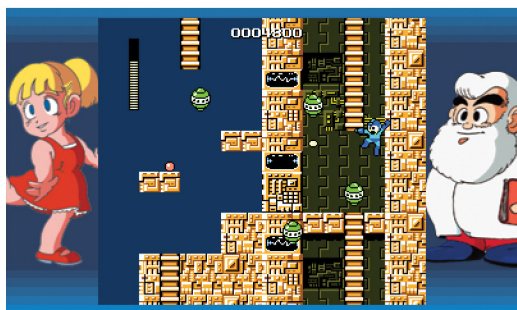
It's a shame we had to wait this long to be introduced to the world of Popolocrois, but if you're a classic JRPG fan, you'll want to pick this magical adventure up. – **REBECCA**

3DS PUBLISHER: XSEED GAMES
DEVELOPERS: MARVELOUS & EPICS



THE ORIGINAL MANGA

In lieu of offering a preorder bonus or special edition, XSEED is offering all of us a special treat: They've produced an English translation of Yohsuke Tamori's Popolocrois Story, first published 35 years ago in Japan! Pietro is sent by his father to retrieve the Crown of Wisdom, which was stolen by Gami Gami and the Black Baron. On his way to Dragon Mountain, Pietro meets the White Knight, rescues a baby dragon and gets help from Narcia and Guilda before a climactic final battle. You can read the entire adventure on XSEED Games' official Return to Popolocrois website, returntopopolocrois.com.



PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPERS: CAPCOM & DIGITAL ECLIPSE

Robot Masters Remastered

MEGA MAN LEGACY COLLECTION

WHEN CAPCOM ANNOUNCED Mega Man Legacy Collection last June, the community responded with mixed emotions. On one hand, it's comforting to see the Blue Bomber in a new release after years in software limbo; on the other, how much faith can Capcom have in the franchise if the only original offering after so long is a retro game compilation?

No sense worrying about Capcom's backroom plans at the moment, though. Instead, let's focus on the present!

Legacy Collection is a celebration of Mega Man's six "Classic" adventures from the NES. Leading the restoration effort is Digital Eclipse, a studio that aims to preserve old games in much the same way The Criterion Collection preserves old films. To that end, each title here is delivered with a focus on NES hardware accuracy – that means every instance of slowdown and flicker that plagued the originals has been maintained. It also means no extra in-game bells and whistles like remixed music or on-the-fly weapon swapping. This is as pure an experience as you can get without dusting off Nintendo's original 8-bit machine.

We've already reviewed the Classic games in their Virtual Console incarnations, so there's no need to retread old ground. You ought to know the drill – lab assistant-turned-superhero Mega Man battles Dr. Wily's army of Robot Masters, steals their weapons then storms Wily's fortress. Rinse and repeat. At their best, these are among the finest action platformers of all time; at their worst, they're still pretty darn good.

The real question is, how does the collection compare to the Virtual Console ports? Quite favorably, actually! NES VC titles on 3DS are scaled to fill as much of the screen as possible, resulting in a blurry and washed-out image. Meanwhile, the games run at native NES resolution through Legacy Collection, so the picture is crisp with vibrant colors. And although you can generate save states in both, only in this collection can you customize the control scheme.

The goodies don't end there! You can enable a themed border to frame the game window, while the otherwise unused touchscreen displays the current game's Japanese boxart. Speaking of which, both the American "Mega Man" and Japanese "Rockman" versions of each game can be enjoyed! Aside from some Japanese text and a few pieces of art, the builds are nearly identical, save for a difficulty selection in Mega Man 2 that was absent in the Japanese original – "Normal" mode was added to make the game easier for Western players.

Outside of the games, there's a music player – which sadly cannot be enjoyed while the game is in sleep

mode, unlike those in Theatrhythm Final Fantasy and Super Smash Bros. for Nintendo 3DS. There's a museum filled with regional assets and official concept art – there are even scans of the original Japanese game manuals (although oddly not of the English ones). And there's a database with background details for every enemy, including bosses and their weaknesses – you can even practice battling against the Robot Masters straight from this menu!

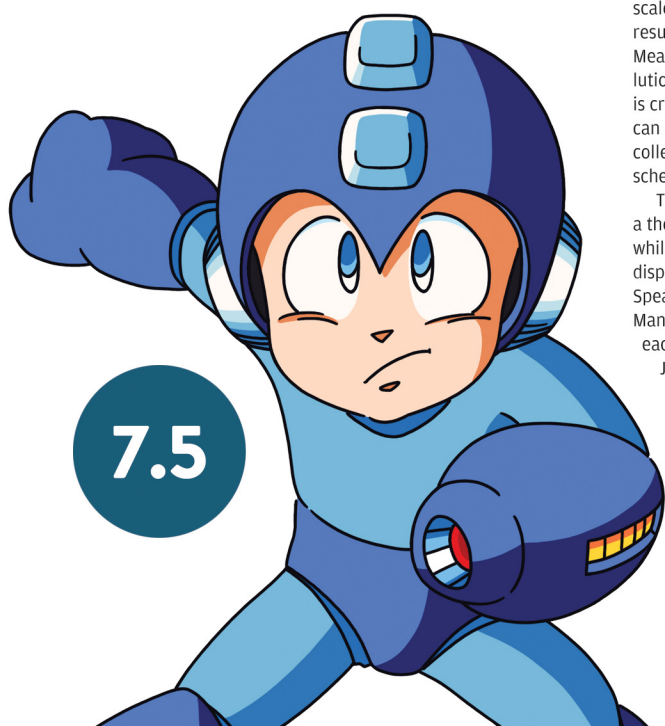
The heftiest bonuses are the Challenges: 54 tasks ranging from beating bosses without using special weapons to clearing all of the "appearing block" segments from all six games in one marathon session. The format is similar to NES Remix – each leg of a Challenge has been lifted directly from the main games, and reaching the end of one will whisk you to the next. As you jump between games, you must readjust to added or removed techniques such as the charge shot and slide.

If you scan the Mega Man amiibo – or the Gold Mega Man amiibo from the Legacy Collection Collector's Edition box – you can access 11 more Challenges, though for some bizarre reason they don't remain unlocked when you turn off the game, forcing a re-scan every session. There are sadly no leaderboards to compare global clear times, but nonetheless, these tasks are a fun test of your Mega Man-iness.

Certain glitches do pop up now and then, some of which have a detrimental impact on gameplay. The audio will sometimes crackle – most noticeably during the first song you select in the music player. Meanwhile, the actual games suffer from framerate stutter – a much more annoying effect than slowdown. This occurs very rarely, with one exception – Mega Man 5 is completely overrun by stutter to the point that it might cause eye strain. Curiously, the stutter is remedied by playing the Japanese game versions, so until a patch is released, you should play it safe and go full Rockman.

Then there's the elephant in the room: 2004's Mega Man Anniversary Collection. Though that release had its own share of technical issues, it at least compiled all the numbered Classic games released up until that point. It's hard not to feel like Legacy Collection is a downgrade in comparison, despite Digital Eclipse's stated restoration mission. It's really up to you to decide whether or not the lack of Mega Man 7-10 is a deal breaker.

It's a shame that Digital Eclipse couldn't iron out all the wrinkles, but despite all that, Mega Man Legacy Collection is a decent little package. You get six of the most amazing NES games around and their Famicom counterparts, some lovely extras and a few additional hours of entertainment in the form of remixed Challenges. Not a bad deal at all! – **TONY**



ASK THE FORCE

IF YOU COULD OWN ONE OF LINK'S ITEMS IN REAL LIFE, WHICH WOULD YOU PICK, AND WHY?



CHRIS

I'd pick the Cane of Somaria. With the power to create solid blocks out of thin air, I'd be able to finally clean out my gutters without lugging a gigantic ladder outside!



DAVID

Hookshot. But not the lousy one that requires targets, I'm thinking more like the classic "stick to almost anything" type.



MARK

I'd take the Ladder from the original Zelda. I'd then rent it to Chris for a very generous hourly rate.



REBECCA

I think that's actually a Stepladder...



BRETT

The Ocarina of Time, paired with the Grays Sports Almanac. Then I could just buy the other items. Heh.



TONY

Forget Link's items... I just want the satchel he uses to carry all his items! That thing can hold infinity!



Don't Let Yourself Get LEGO'd Out LEGO MARVEL'S AVENGERS

WHEN YOU WAKE up and greet each new day, you can be assured of three things. One, the sun will rise. Two, the atmosphere will still contain breathable oxygen. And three, a new LEGO universe game from Traveller's Tales will probably be on sale on store shelves and in digital marketplaces.

The latest drop is LEGO Marvel's Avengers, a third-person action game based around the Marvel cinematic universe. It's a competent little romp, but there's little about it that justifies choosing it over an older LEGO title of the same pedigree, like 2013's LEGO Marvel Superheroes (which is available on the Wii U, Nintendo 3DS and even the Nintendo DS).

For one thing, the character roster in LEGO Marvel's Avengers is quite diminished next to Marvel Superheroes. Since Marvel's Avengers is based on the movies of the same name, its cast of playable characters has some notable casualties because of the Marvel Movie Property Wars that our grandchildren will sing about in the year 2056.

That means you spend plenty of time with the likes of Captain America, Black Widow, the Hulk, Hawkeye, Thor and Iron Man. But Spider-Man, Deadpool, and the X-Men are all M.I.A. – even though they, again, they did appear in LEGO Marvel Superheroes. However, in their place Marvel's Avengers gives some screen time to lesser-known characters like Fin Fang Foom. You can never go wrong with a dragon god!

One argument you can make for playing LEGO Marvel's Avengers over Marvel Superheroes is that the plot for

the former hews closely to Marvel's movies – specifically, the events in The Avengers, The Avengers: Age of Ultron, Captain America: The First Avenger, Captain America: The Winter Soldier, Iron Man 3 and Thor: The Dark World. That's great, if you're a fan of the movies – but the game's plot jumps from one film to the next rapidly and with little warning. It's frankly confusing.

I'm left to wonder if the restless plot driving Marvel's Avengers isn't a bit too much for very little kids to grasp. In fact, I often wonder if TT's LEGO games aren't sometimes a bit too much for very little kids, period. While playing Marvel's Avengers, I found myself lost more than once. I got stuck on puzzles because objects I needed to manipulate or build with often blend in with the background. I guess that's what happens when you're in environments filled with nothing but grey consoles and grey rubble.

Sometimes hint icons offer suggestions on what you need to do, but the advice isn't always specific. Other times, Marvel's Avengers simply assumes

you've played enough LEGO games to know what to do next. In one instance, I had to look up the answer to a puzzle because I had no idea green LEGO handles can be turned around. There was no in-game prompt. Marvel's Avengers is truly a game kids will best enjoy in the company of an adult. That's what the co-op option is for.

Despite my grouching, kids and their guardians (of the galaxy?) will have an OK time here. There are still loads of chuckle-worthy sight gags, some of which are obviously meant to smooth the movies' rough spots into something more G-rated and family-friendly. No real deaths here. Just wacky antics.

But it's still worth wondering if we're all starting to get a bit LEGO'd out. LEGO Marvel's Avengers plays like pretty much every other LEGO game, and gosh, there are a lot – it just feels particularly unnecessary thanks to the existence of Marvel Superheroes. There's no reason to latch onto it unless you're just into the Marvel cinematic universe. – **NADIA**

6.0



Wii U PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. I.E.
DEVELOPER: TT GAMES



Bringing Down the Eidolons

FINAL FANTASY EXPLORERS

NINTENDO FANS ARE certainly no strangers to cooperative Final Fantasy adventures. For years, the Crystal Chronicles series has been synonymous with Nintendo consoles, giving players a real-time, action-oriented take on the Final Fantasy universe. Final Fantasy Explorers, the latest co-op spin-off of the venerable RPG franchise, carries on some of the spirit of the Crystal Chronicles games, but it draws most of its inspiration from a different source: Monster Hunter. Like Capcom's franchise, the goal of Explorers is to defeat towering monsters and forge new armaments with the loot you collect, and while there's some fun to be had battling classic Final Fantasy summons like Ifrit, Ramuh and Shiva, the game ultimately falls short of its ambitions.

Explorers isn't shy about showcasing its Monster Hunter influence. After creating an avatar, you arrive at the town of Libertas, the game's hub area and the primary destination for all aspiring explorers. Your reason for venturing to Libertas is to gather

pieces of the Grand Crystal, which are scattered all over the surrounding island of Amostra, but the sudden appearance of Eidolons – hulking elemental demigods terrorizing the island – takes precedence, and it falls to you to band together with other brave explorers and defeat the powerful creatures.

As in Monster Hunter, you'll spend the majority of your downtime perusing the various services in Libertas, forging new weaponry at the blacksmith, stocking up on supplies from the merchant and taking on quests from the Explorers Guild. These are divided into two types: Story Quests, which advance the plot and typically involve subduing Eidolons and other monsters, and Subquests, secondary objectives that usually involve gathering specific items.

Where Explorers sets itself apart from Monster Hunter is its job system. Like the mainline Final Fantasy series, you're able to assign different classes to your explorers, changing the way

you approach battle. This is especially satisfying when venturing out with other players, as you can each take on a specific role to more effectively topple Eidolons. Online play constitutes the main attraction of Explorers; you can easily connect with other players by tapping a button on the touchscreen while in Libertas, and online quests typically run smoothly. Even if you prefer to venture solo, there's still some fun to be had with Explorers, as you can create monster companions to join you in the field. These are no substitute for human players, but they provided much needed backup when tackling Eidolons, and they can level up and be combined with other monsters to further increase their strength.

Despite all of its structural similarities to Monster Hunter, however, Explorers lacks the depth and complexity of Capcom's series, and the experience suffers for it. While battles against the Eidolons are hectic and generally enjoyable, they never have

3DS PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER:
SQUARE ENIX

the same sense of urgency and spontaneity as fighting prehistoric beasts in Monster Hunter. Where Capcom's monoliths would employ varying tactics and would frequently retreat around the map, forcing players to give chase, the Eidolons are locked in their own, spacious rooms, and battles with them typically become a matter of hacking away, then backing off when they ready their own attacks.

Similarly, the world itself feels bland. Unlike Monster Hunter, which offers several distinct and expansive areas to explore, Final Fantasy Explorers features one interconnected overworld. The downside to this is that the island feels much smaller as a result, and by locking Eidolons away in their own separate rooms at the end of caves, there's no sense of danger or surprise to the adventure – which is what a game about exploration should instill in players.

In the end, Final Fantasy Explorers is a fun, if shallow, cooperative adventure, but the game pales in comparison to the titles it mimics. There are more compelling adventures to be found on the 3DS for both solo and cooperative explorers. – **KEVIN K.**



6.5



The Bonds of Blood

FIRE EMBLEM FATES: BIRTHRIGHT

FIRE EMBLEM'S RISE to prominence outside of Japan – after being straight-up ignored for its first decade of existence – has been a sight to behold. Starting with Marth and Roy appearing in Super Smash Bros. Melee in 2001 and finally breaking through to the mainstream with Fire Emblem: Awakening in 2013, it's been a long, hard-fought battle for the series to reach a high level of notoriety. Fire Emblem Fates is the first game released into that brave new world, and it's a mammoth package, with three full campaigns available in total. For this review, I played Fire Emblem Fates: Birthright, which is considered to be the easiest and most straightforward of all three versions.

Unfortunately, that also means that Birthright is the most boring. It's certainly gentle, as you accrue more characters than you know what to do with, the missions aren't complicated – with nearly every objective being "kill all the enemies" – and you have seemingly infinite opportunities to level up your party outside of the main story. Birthright is a leisurely game that certainly can get challenging when you crank up the difficulty, but the staid objectives make it the most vanilla Fire Emblem I've ever played.

That's weird to me, because I was never a big fan of permadeath and some of the more brutal aspects of the series, but after seeing how it can be when you go too far down the Casual difficulty thought process, I find myself craving more of a challenge (which thankfully is delivered in Conquest and Revelation).

Don't confuse this with Birthright being a bad game; it's not. It still has the magic of the series with its well-written characters, engaging story and class variety. Following the twists and turns of your avatar character's quest to defeat the Nohr family that raised her while allying with her "birthright" (get it?) Hoshido family is fun and intriguing. All of that is just hampered by a lack of variety.

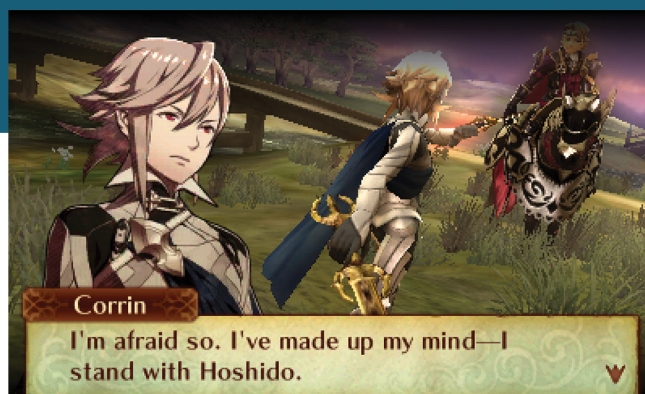
The new additions help balance that out, though. My Castle is a fun distraction where you can build up your very own town with shops and armaments that can be used to

strengthen your party and gear, as well as set up defenses for invasions. Invasions – which can happen randomly or via StreetPass – are where you have to use your castle as a battleground, defending a point from incoming enemies. It's one of the places where the objectives change up, which makes it a welcome respite from the grind of slaying enemy after enemy in the story.

Paralogues are another part that mixes up the goals. These are accessed by the romancing aspect of the game, when you have a male and a female character fight next to each other enough so that way they attain S support status and have a baby. Said baby is then hurtled through time and space to become an adult, and then you can get them to join your party by completing their Parologue mission.

That part is great fun, but what isn't fun are the changes made to how the parents increase their romantic support rank. In Awakening, paired-up characters (who share the same map space) would both attack enemies and gain experience, but in Fates, only one character attacks and gains experience. The only way to have both attack and gain experience on a turn is by having them in separate spaces. Granted, Awakening's method was very overpowered near the game's end, but Fates' restrictions make keeping characters next to each other far more tedious if you have any intention of leveling both up. Trying to make your party evenly leveled is a chore, which, when compounded on top of the stale mission objectives, makes a big chunk of Birthright feel like going through the motions.

When Birthright transcends that repetition and monotony, it's on the same level of Awakening – but that happens far less often than I hoped. If you're not that deep into strategy games or are new to the Fire Emblem series, Birthright is wholeheartedly worth playing, but if you're a wily Fire Emblem veteran, the only reason to play through this game is for story completion and understanding. The dichotomy of Fire Emblem Fates is quite simple: newcomers go to Birthright, while experienced players should play Conquest. – NEAL



7.0



3DS PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS



9.0



Nurture Over Nature

FIRE EMBLEM FATES: CONQUEST

FIRE EMBLEM IS a franchise that I've enjoyed every step of the way. Ever since the first Western release on the Game Boy Advance, I've become obsessed and enthralled with these deep strategy games. I even went back and played all of the older Japan-exclusive titles, just so my knowledge of the series would be complete! The games were never overly successful in the West, until 2013's *Fire Emblem: Awakening* shook that foundation to its core and a slew of new fans became hungry for more.

What made *Awakening* different? They toyed around with the art style, made it friendlier for newcomers and added features that could excite more people. It was a gamble that truly worked, but there was one problem: What would be the precedent for the next game? Make it more hardcore, or keep it just a friendly adventure? The answer was both.

While *Birthright* keeps the newcomers entertained, the true strategic thinkers will find what they want in *Conquest*. It still has the same perks that were introduced in *Awakening*, but it creates new restrictions that are entirely its own. The missions are harsh, eventful and truly put your troop management skills to the test. You'll have to deal with more objectives than ever before and succeed at them all to push forward. The extreme shift might take some getting used to, but it makes completing each task so much more intriguing. You'll be asked to finish a battle within a time frame, defend a certain part of the map or seek out one key enemy on the battlefield.

The strategy gameplay side of it is handled extremely fairly. Even within these harsh terms, I found myself finding the perfect way to finish each fight. You'll be sitting there sometimes for minutes on end thinking about it, but there's always a way out. The grid-based battlefields give you plenty to work with and preparing your units wisely before battling is top priority. Along the way, you'll keep a keen eye on hit chance percentages and use the weapon triangle to your advantage.

The weapon triangle has seen a major overhaul since *Awakening*, by the way, and it comes into play more than ever – figuring it out before

your enemy does is crucial. Like a good game of chess, you have to know the strengths of each one of your pieces – making just one mistake can be deadly.

Deadly in the sense that you'll be losing key members of your squad! Characters that you've spent hours upon hours sinking your soul into will be gone in an instant after one wrong move. While you can lower the difficulty and deactivate permadeath, the true impact of any *Fire Emblem* is only felt when you lose someone you care about. Sadly, the game doesn't always acknowledge them in the proper ways – I've had characters die on me and the game just casually moved on like nothing had happened. This was the most annoying thing to me, because *Awakening* handled these heart-wrenching moments a lot better.

There's some serious intrigue found in the story of *Conquest*. While I found it heartbreaking to turn down the chance to side with Hoshido, the story that follows is absolutely brilliant. Corrin, the main character, has to redeem her/himself to King Garon, whom many see as evil. Together with your siblings, you're trying to change the Nohr kingdom from the inside. War with Hoshido and the world at large doesn't seem to make sense to Corrin, and he's determined to let the whole world see it. Naturally, you'll be getting into a lot of trouble along the way, which comes together in ways that outdid my own expectations. In general, though, I also think that the warriors in Nohr's army have some of the greatest designs. It's all clearly inspired by European kingdoms of yore and I was intrigued by every new character and interaction.

I could keep talking about *Fire Emblem Fates: Conquest* for another 1,000 words, but it all comes down to this: If you've been hoping for a return to the strict, truly strategic old-school *Fire Emblem* way – the way the Japan-only games played years ago, you'll find it here. It doesn't stray away from challenging you, and that's the thing I love about it the most.

I never felt safe or secure. I was constantly looking over my options, again and again – every moment in every battle matters so much! If only the deaths had been handled with more grace and impact, *Conquest* would have been perfect. – DAAN

3DS PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS

A Brave New World

PROJECT X ZONE 2

A QUESTION MOST anyone needs to ask when looking at a sequel is, "Did I like the previous game?"

That's arguably more important here than in many cases, given just how divisive the original Project X Zone was. Heavy on content but light on substance, Project X Zone 2 mirrors the original in a lot of ways. Suffice it to say, if you enjoyed the original, it's hard to imagine you wouldn't like this entry in the series – quite possibly even more. Depending on how close to the edge you're teetering on disliking the original, though, there might be enough changes here to draw you back in.

The combination of strategy-lite gameplay and the button-mashing Cross Active Battle System returns here, with some slight refinements. Before, streams of newly spawned enemies and damage-soaking bosses that took quite a while to defeat were commonplace, and though they remain, they've been toned down considerably. While many of the game's 40+ chapters can still take a bit of time to complete, the flow feels much better and less tedious overall.

Combat is refined slightly as well, with the ability to stun opponents with an assist from a solo unit, locking them in place so that much higher combos can be achieved. In this way, part of the strategy comes down to when to time your button presses and combinations so you can do the most damage possible.

The overall presentation is very similar to the original game as well, with many assets such as portraits, pixel art and even music being reused for returning characters. Just the same, there are many new characters as well, so it balances out fairly well. Unfortunately for some, the voice acting is once again entirely in Japanese, even though a good number of these characters have English voice actors. While it would have been nice to hear some English reprisals of popular roles, there's almost a certain kitsch "subbed anime" quality to the presentation that remains enjoyable.

While the gameplay has seen refinements, it feels like the bulk of improvement to the game came in the reason most people are probably looking at this game in the first place: the story. The original was quite amusing, but Project X Zone 2 takes

things to another level. The story still feels by and large like what it is – a reason to pull all these disparate franchises together – but it does so with such aplomb that it kind of feels right.

Many of the franchises are treated as part of the same world, and the dialogue almost makes you believe that yes, Street Fighter, Virtua Fighter, Resident Evil, Shinobi, Darkstalkers, Tekken, Yakuza, .hack and more all coexist just off-screen from one another. Meanwhile, the crossing of time and space works as well as anything to bring characters from Mega Man X, Strider, Xenoblade Chronicles, Xenosaga and Fire Emblem into the fold. Even the odd additions of Ace Attorney's Phoenix Wright and Maya Fey are handled in such a way that they aren't just thrown into the mix, but actually makes sense.

More than the story, the script is the selling point of this game. Everyone feels in character, yet there's so much amusing banter and dialogue filled with references that are more "for fans, by fans" than "in your face" that the biggest reason to keep playing is to see how each new character gets along with the rest. From a number of characters debating the best way to scale a cliff with their own patented wall-climbing techniques to SEGATA! SANSHIRO! asking Jill and Chris if their Genesis scanner has Blast Processing, to Xiaomu calling a group of B.O.W.s "the residents of Evil Creek," there's always something amusing around the next corner.

While I'd love to see the characters native to this series get their own non-crossover title, this fanservice (of both kinds; note that the T rating is well-earned for innuendo alone) convention is like a giant mixer that may well ignite interest in other franchises you've never looked at before. For instance, I'm much more curious about .hack now, and while it's *probably* a bit more over-the-top here, I'm now keenly interested in checking out the Yakuza games as well.

Much like its predecessor, Project X Zone 2 is a lighthearted, fun time – and it manages to improve on that first game just so. It may not make many new fans, but those who enjoyed the original should be more than satisfied. – DAVID

3DS PUBLISHER: BANDAI NAMCO
DEVELOPER: MONOLITH SOFT



ARCHIVE

The complete list of Nintendo Force retail reviews from the past two years. Scores reflect individual reviewers' opinions.

3DS

TITLE	SCORE	REVIEWER	ISSUE
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy+	8.0	Lucas	#14
Adventure Time: Secret of the Nameless Kingdom	7.0	David	#13
Animal Crossing: Happy Home Designer	8.0	Daan	#17
Chibi-Robo! Zip Lash	6.0	Lucas	#18
Code Name: S.T.E.A.M.	9.5	Lucas	#14
Conception II: Children of the Seven Stars	7.0	Neal	#9
Cooking Mama 5: Bon Appetit!	7.5	David	#11
Disney Magical World	7.5	Daan	#8
Dragon Ball Z: Extreme Butoden	5.0	Tony	#18
Etrian Mystery Dungeon	7.0	Neal	#15
Etrian Odyssey 2 Untold: The Fafnir Knight	8.5	Thor	#17
Fantasy Life	8.5	Evan	#12
Fossil Fighters: Frontier	7.0	Lucas	#15
Gravity Falls: Legend of the Gnome Gemulets	6.0	Nadia	#19
Harvest Moon: The Lost Valley	5.0	Rebecca	#14
Hatsune Miku: Project Mirai DX	9.0	Daan	#17
How to Train Your Dragon 2	6.5	David	#10
LBX: Little Battlers eXperience	6.0	Neal	#17
Lord of Magna: Maiden Heaven	7.0	Thor	#16
Mario & Luigi: Paper Jam	6.5	Mark	#19
Mario Golf: World Tour	9.0	Kevin C.	#9
Monster Hunter 4 Ultimate	9.0	Evan	#14
Pac-Man and the Ghostly Adventures 2	7.5	David	#12
Persona Q: Shadow of the Labyrinth	8.5	Daan	#13
Pokémon Alpha Sapphire	8.5	Lucas	#12
Pokémon Art Academy	6.0	Mark	#11
Pokémon Omega Ruby	8.5	Thor	#12

Pokémon Super Mystery Dungeon	8.0	Rebecca	#19
Power Rangers Super Megaforce	6.0	David	#12
Professor Layton vs. Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney	9.0	Robert	#9
Puzzle & Dragons: Super Mario Bros. Edition	8.0	Daan	#15
Puzzle & Dragons Z	8.5	Daan	#15
Senran Kagura 2: Deep Crimson	7.0	Nadia	#17
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2: Record Breaker	8.5	Chris	#16
Skylanders SuperChargers Racing	8.0	David	#18
Sonic Boom: Shattered Crystal	5.0	Tony	#12
Stella Glow	8.5	Thor	#19
Story of Seasons	8.5	Rebecca	#15
Super Smash Bros. for Nintendo 3DS	8.0	Lucas	#12
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	7.5	David	#11
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Danger of the Ooze	8.5	David	#12
Tetris Ultimate	5.5	Lucas	#12
The Legend of Zelda: The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D	8.0	Thor	#18
The Legend of Zelda: Tri Force Heroes	9.0	Kevin K.	#14
The LEGO Movie Videogame	7.0	Brett	#18
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy: Curtain Call	7.0	Thor	#8
Tomodachi Life (Review #1)	9.5	Neal	#11
Tomodachi Life (Review #2)	7.5	Daan	#10
Transformers: Rise of the Dark Spark	6.0	Tony	#10
Ultimate NES Remix	8.0	David	#10
Xenoblade Chronicles 3D	6.0	Chris	#13
Yo-kai Watch	9.0	Lucas	#15
Yoshi's New Island	9.0	Lucas	#18
	7.0	Neal	#8

Wii U

TITLE	SCORE	REVIEWER	ISSUE
Animal Crossing: amiibo Festival	5.0	Kevin C.	#18
Bayonetta	8.0	Neal	#12
Bayonetta 2	9.0	Neal	#12
Call of Duty: Ghosts	7.0	Evan	#6
Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker	9.0	Lucas	#13
Devil's Third	7.0	Jonathan	#19
Disney Infinity 2.0: Marvel Super Heroes	7.0	Brett	#12
Disney Infinity 3.0: Inside Out	8.0	Daan	#17
Disney Infinity 3.0: Rise Against the Empire	7.0	Daan	#18
Disney Infinity 3.0: Star Wars: The Force Awakens	7.5	Daan	#19
Disney Infinity 3.0: Toy Box Speedway	9.0	Daan	#18
Disney Infinity 3.0: Toy Box Takeover	7.5	Daan	#18
Disney Infinity 3.0: Twilight of the Republic	8.5	Daan	#17
Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze	9.5	Lucas	#8
Hyrule Warriors	8.0	Daan	#11
Kirby and the Rainbow Curse	8.5	Neal	#14
Legend of Kay Anniversary	6.5	Chris	#17
LEGO Batman 3: Beyond Gotham	7.0	Chris	#13
LEGO Dimensions	8.5	David	#18
LEGO Jurassic World	7.0	Nadia	#16
LEGO The Hobbit	6.5	Evan	#9
Mario Kart 8	8.5	Tony	#9
Mario Party 10	7.5	Lucas	#14
Mario Tennis: Ultra Smash	5.0	Kevin C.	#19
Pac-Man and the Ghostly Adventures 2	7.5	David	#12
Rodea the Sky Soldier	4.0	Tony	#18
Skylanders SuperChargers	8.5	David	#18
Skylanders: Trap Team	8.0	Kevin C.	#12
Sonic Boom: Rise of Lyric	2.0	Tony	#12
Splatoon	9.5	Lucas	#15
Super Mario Maker	9.0	Lucas	#17
Super Smash Bros. for Wii U	10	Lucas	#12
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	6.0	Chris	#9
The LEGO Movie Videogame	8.0	Brett	#8
The Peanuts Movie: Snoopy's Grand Adventure	6.0	Rebecca	#19
Transformers: Rise of the Dark Spark	7.0	David	#10
Watch Dogs	8.0	David	#13
Wii Sports Club	7.5	Kevin K.	#10
Xenoblade Chronicles X	9.5	Lucas	#19
Yoshi's Woolly World	9.5	Mark	#16

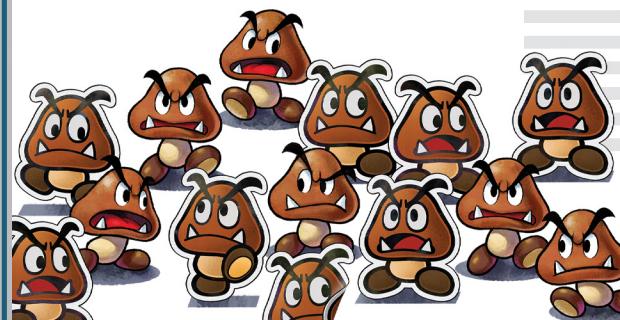
6.5
MARK

SECOND OPINION MARIO & LUIGI: PAPER JAM

8.5
NEAL

GENERALLY, I'VE LOVED all of the Mario RPGs. I still consider Super Mario RPG to be one of my favorite games ever made, and the debuts of the Mario & Luigi and Paper Mario series are, in my eyes, top games on the Game Boy Advance and Nintendo 64. However, in the 20 years that Mario has spent occasionally going on RPG adventures, I feel like the games lost their way. Paper Mario slowly devolved into a weird, unfun adventure game in 2012's Sticker Star and Mario & Luigi became an overwrought, text-heavy affair that went on about 10-20 hours longer than it should have in 2013's Dream Team. After that pair of underwhelming efforts, the two series merged together in Mario & Luigi: Paper Jam, which was a pleasant surprise early in 2016. The 3DS game is smartly streamlined, with less text and explanation than its predecessor. Instead of hearing how to execute the same timed-battle moves for the bazillionth time, nearly every tutorial element is hidden in a sub-menu that you access only if you want to. The story is similarly streamlined in a fun way, as it focuses on the interplay of the normal and paper worlds – you get double the Bowser, double the Mario and double the Peach, and the entire game is better for it. Paper Mario adds more nuance and complexity to the combat and exploration as well, making it so you have to control three characters at once now.

Paper Jam is still a little long in the tooth at about 25-30 hours, but it's not as much of a slog as Dream Team because it keeps moving forward and doesn't bog you down with nearly as much text. This is the way Mario RPGs should always be: light romps through a colorful world with lots of neat twists on the series' mechanics and tropes. – **NEAL**





COMMUNITY



- TRAVIS LENNON

COLLECTING

30 YEARS OF ZELDA MERCH

How many collectibles do you think you could gather over the course of three decades?

SOME NINTENDO MERCHANDISE is easy to collect – you can find a plethora of items with just your fingertips and an Internet connection. That's not the case with Zelda collecting, though! Most items related to the legendary series are very limited – hard to find and costly.

During Nintendo's early years of merchandising, Mario was always the focus – so Link and his Hyrulian company would often share merch with the mustached man, appearing on the opposite side of otherwise Mushroom Kingdom-aligned items. Now that there's an established, independent Zelda fanbase, merchandise is becoming easier to come by – but for the majority of the series' existence, items have only trickled out and been gobbled up quickly each time they've appeared. If there's one Nintendo franchise where prices on collectibles are guaranteed to increase, it's The Legend of Zelda! (After all, if it was easy to collect and never raised in value, we wouldn't be as interested – but that's just from a collecting standpoint.)

The other draw is passion for the series. Randy Wolford put it well, saying, "I collect Zelda because I love Zelda. I love that world I was introduced to and having physical items around to look at reminds me of it; keeps it from becoming a distant memory. I collect Zelda so that I can re-enter that world without necessarily turning on a console or listening to a song. That's why I collect anything, really!"

Going rates for many vintage Zelda items have exceeded \$1,000, and they continue to escalate as more fans attain buying power. So collecting Zelda can be a dangerous quest – but buy somethin' will ya! It'll mean even more goods for us to collect going forward! – **BRETT**



- BRENDAN KONRAD



- RANDY WOLFORD



- BRETT MARTIN

USER-CREATED CONTENT

MAKING ZELDA IN SUPER MARIO MAKER

Can you conquer these community-made dungeons?

IF YOU'RE LIKE me – and thousands of other like-minded course creators out there – one of the first things you wanted to do with Super Mario Maker's level editor was see if you could re-create moments from other non-Mario games in it! And among these Mushroom Kingdom remixes of other game worlds, the most popular subject matter for adaptation has clearly been The Legend of Zelda. So many people own a Link amiibo that it just makes sense that they'd want to put it to use in an appropriately Hyrule-ish environment!

I've personally loved playing through each and

every Zelda-inspired Mario Maker level I've come across, chiefly because they're almost guaranteed to be creative – you have to think in some out-of-the-box ways in order to translate concepts like the Zelda series' puzzles and traps so that they can work using only Mario's available building blocks. Whether it's P Switches substituting for door keys or a Fire Flower taking the place of Link's sword beams, capturing the feel of playing Zelda in Super Mario Maker is possible when done right! (And with the new update adding actual keys, here's hoping even more Zelda-themed levels appear!) – **LUCAS**



DAMPÉ'S HEART-POUNGING RACE

BY KEVIN

You'll have to go all-out and never let off the B Button to keep the speed you'll need to clear the time-limited doors in this mad dash, a remake of the gravekeeper's ghost chase in Ocarina of Time.

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Send your levels to SuperMarioMaker@NFMagazine.com

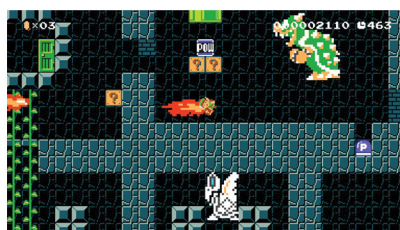


KOKIRI FOREST

BY NICK

Nick is building the Ocarina of Time experience piece by piece, starting at the beginning with this adaptation of the Kokiri Forest – complete with a "shield"-selling shop and the Great Deku Tree!

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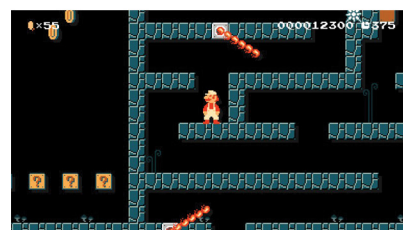


ZELDA REMIX

BY MIKETENDO 64

At first glance, this level looks like it's going to be a straightforward homage to Zelda 1 alone – but that's just the beginning! As the "series" evolves, you swap into more modern Link costumes!

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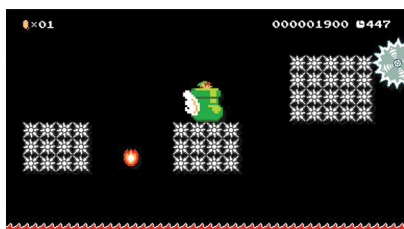


ZELDUNGEON!

BY LILTRI4CE!

This classic underworld maze is packed with block-built art and comes with your choice of several different Zelda series character costumes. (Or, if you want an easier time, you can nab a Fire Flower.)

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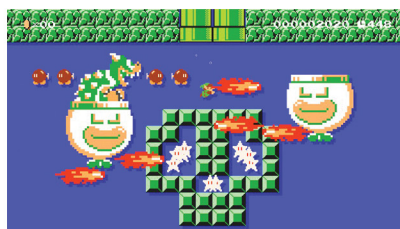


LEGEND OF ZELDA TYPE DUNGEON 2

BY MARIO9919

Mario Maker's been out for half a year now, and so far my favorite levels are those that make you earn different items, then use those items to get past obstacles you couldn't pass before. Just like Zelda!

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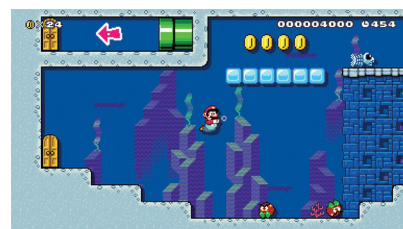


IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE!

BY NYNJAS.COM

This one is deceptive – from its promo picture it looks like a simple swimming stage, but then things get real when twin Bowsers attack our green-capped hero from both sides! Dangerous indeed!

4B13-0000-0111-19CD



MARIO VS. THE WATER TEMPLE

BY DANIEL

Finally, anyone who's ever played Ocarina of Time is well aware of the mental torture of its Water Temple, and Daniel decided to inflict that pain on Mario Maker players with his sinister puzzles!

DCF2-0000-0088-9F75

FAN GAMES

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM?

After a couple of failed attempts years ago, a new team is at work making *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 2D*.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: *Ocarina of Time* is one of the best games that Nintendo has ever made – and also one of the best video games of all time. That's not a statement to be made lightly about any game, and more often than not, people would be at your throat for coming forth with such a notion. That said, while there will never be definitive proof that *Ocarina of Time* is one of the best games ever, there's certainly a lot of reasons to think that way. Most review aggregates put *Ocarina of Time* in the top spot for best-reviewed game ever. Millions of fans will tell you it's the *Zelda* to trump all others. Even Nintendo themselves still use *Ocarina of Time* as the blueprint for every *Zelda* game that's followed after! A legacy like that lets you know that *Ocarina of Time* really was – and still is – something special.

Another way to gauge a game's legacy is by the fan-made content that surrounds it in the years following its release, and *Ocarina of Time* is almost second to none. There are thousands of lovingly written fanfictions to be discovered online, new musical tributes almost every week and speedruns that keep aiming to squeeze one more millisecond out of the world-record completion time.

But perhaps above all of those tributes in terms of sheer effort and invested time comes the creation of fan games, and there have also been plenty of those. People have tweaked *Ocarina of Time* in all sorts of ways to provide new and unique experiences, but there's one particular plan of attack that always seems to end in failure: the desire to remake the entirety of *Ocarina of Time* in 2D.

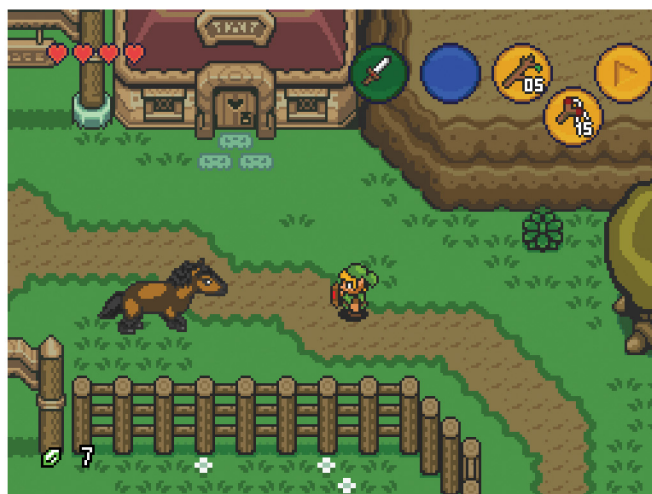
Over the past 10 years, there have been a couple of notable fan projects that looked to turn the entire 3D world of *Ocarina of Time* into a 2D game in the style of Link's 16-bit adventure, *A Link to the Past*. Those projects – one by Richard Denton and another by Daniel Barras – had thousands of hours poured into them, but both ended in defeat. Rumor has it that the pressure the *Zelda* fan community placed on Denton to complete his work was so severe that he faked his own death to be able to be free of the obligation to continue working on his version! Whether or not that's true we'll likely never know, but it's undoubtedly true that this undertaking is immense – there's just too much work to be done, too many ways to interpret the move from 3D to 2D and too many design choices to contemplate in the translation. It's a job for only the most dedicated fans out there, and even they seem to have trouble pulling the project together.

While those past attempts failed, another has now appeared to replace them. This new version of *Ocarina of Time 2D* seems to be the most ambitious we've seen so far, but it also seems to be on a path to success – thanks in part to the fact that this time around it's being handled by a whole team of collaborators instead of one lone person shouldering all the weight.

Ocarina of Time 2D may use the N64 classic as its base, but the project itself started from scratch. It has an original engine, as well as brand-new sprites being created for all sorts of characters, enemies and environments. Visual assets are coming from/inspired by *A Link to the Past*, but there's an incredible amount of new content that has been put together too.

The project currently sits at 20% completion, so there's still a ton of work to be done. The good news is, there's enough work done for you to try out a playable build! There are also trailers available for you to see just how much progress has been made so far. The team behind the project is well aware of the failed attempts that came before them, but they're using that as inspiration to keep pushing. It's certainly the most ambitious *Ocarina of Time* fan project currently running, but we also think it's the one with the best shot at achieving success! – KEVIN C.

OoT-2D.com



MY WORD! A GIGANTIC
BOSS MONSTER!



Glowy-eyed Cyclops FRAIL OCULUS



BUT WHAT COULD ITS
WEAKNESS POSSIBLY BE?!



BY MARK KELLY

NEXT ISSUE

Don't look so forlorn, Lucas! If the rumors are true, your game may finally be getting its long-awaited English-language release soon – maybe even before our next issue gets out the door! Thousands of long-worn frowns will be getting turned upside-down if and when that happens, and you can bet the Nintendo Force is going to celebrate in style – our next edition is going to put **Mother 3** front and center in honor of the game's 10th anniversary of release in Japan, bringing you all a total retrospective on its entire tragic tale of untranslation that's gone on for nearly a decade now. We'll also take the opportunity to turn our attention to the dozens of other notable Nintendo-made games that have never made their way out of Nintendo's home country, as it's not just the EarthBound fans who have been pining to play great games that have stayed stranded across the Pacific for years on end! You can also look forward to our first mobile review (**Miitomo**), our assessment of the delayed **Star Fox Zero** and much more!



IN THE
WORKS FOR
ISSUE #21:

MOTHER 3

**LOST IN
UNTRANSLATION:**
NINTENDO'S GAMES THAT
NEVER LEFT JAPAN

**POKÉMON
SUN & MOON**

BRAVELY SECOND:
END LAYER

**POKKÉN
TOURNAMENT**

KIRBY:
PLANET ROBOBOT

FIRE EMBLEM FATES:
REVELATION

STAR FOX ZERO

**MARIO & SONIC
AT THE RIO 2016
OLYMPIC GAMES**

TADPOLE TREBLE

7TH DRAGON III
CODE: VFD

POKÉMON GO

MiiTOMO

MUTANT MUDDS
SUPER CHALLENGE

ZERO TIME DILEMMA

LEGO STAR WARS:
THE FORCE AWAKENS

**AND MUCH
MORE!**

**MAY/
JUNE 2016**

PLAY THE ORIGINAL!

You know, any time a major video game franchise hits a major anniversary milestone – like The Legend of Zelda turning 30 – it's only natural to celebrate the entire series, as we've done in this issue. But before we close out this edition, I want to ask you to do something, if you never have before: Go play the original Legend of Zelda!

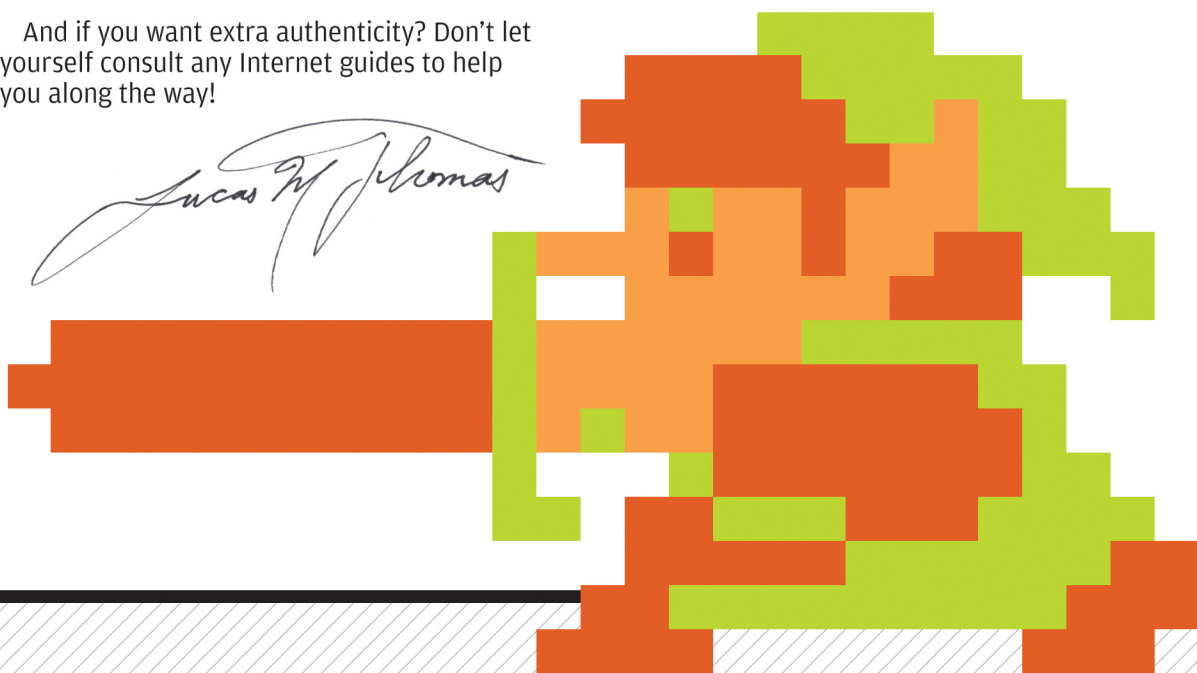
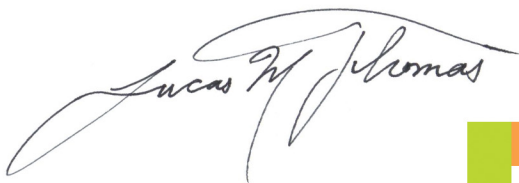
After all, it's the one that's just turned 30. All the others represent its legacy, and it's been an incredible three decades watching that first game's ideas ripple out and grow into such a massive brand for Nintendo – but it's so much more satisfying to see the modern success of the series with eyes that have beheld its beginnings.

The Legend of Zelda, the first one, may very well be my favorite game of all time. I've been known to award that honor to Dr. Mario before, when factoring in the experience of playing it with my Dad over the years – but for single-player adventuring, between just me and the TV, I don't think anything's ever dethroned my childhood experience of exploring the original land of Hyrule.

There's just something magical about it. And still to this day! I just finished replaying it again as we've been working to put together this issue, and it still has the power to rewind my mind back to the '80s, taking me back to the kid I once was, plugging that golden cartridge into the NES and letting myself be whisked away. It adds to the enjoyment of every new sequel that I played that first adventure way back when, too, because I get an extra dose of excitement any time some reference is made to its setting or items or enemies – when Dodongos appear and tower over the screen, I can call upon my memory of when they first Disliked Smoke. When I set sail aboard the King of Red Lions and carve my way through HD waves at sea for hours on end, I can think back to when the Raft functioned as nothing more than a way to trigger automatic screen transitions that lasted no more than three seconds apiece.

I think the reverse may also be interesting, though – that if some of you newer or younger fans out there would go back and play Zelda 1 with nothing but your experiences of Skyward Sword, Twilight Princess or The Wind Waker to draw on for comparison, you'd be able to play and appreciate it in a fresh way that we '80s kids never could. So go for it! The game is easily accessible as a \$5 download on either the 3DS or the Wii U, and you can certainly find the time between now and whenever the all-new Zelda sequel shows up later this year.

And if you want extra authenticity? Don't let yourself consult any Internet guides to help you along the way!





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